RDS is part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

If you enter into an Environmental Stewardship agreement, it will be with the Secretary of State acting through RDS and Defra, and this handbook will form part of it.
Applications for Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) must be made by post.

If you have not received a pre-filled application form and set of application maps with this handbook, you will need to follow these steps:

1. Read sections 1 and 4 of this handbook to check that you and your land are eligible for OELS.
2. Check that all of the land you wish to enter into the scheme is registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR).
   - See section 1.2.1 for guidance on registering land on the RLR.
3. Make sure you have a vendor number.
   - See section 1.2.2 for guidance on vendor numbers.
4. Telephone your Rural Development Service (RDS) office, RDS phone numbers are listed at appendix 6 of this handbook. You will need to quote or confirm the following:
   1. Your name and correspondence address
   2. Your vendor number
   3. The County, Parish, Holding (CPH) number/s covering the RLR land parcels you are entering into OELS (if you do not have a CPH number you will be provided with one when you register your land on the RLR).
   
   You may 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 parcels which are eligible that are not registered under your CPH number/s you have provided.
5. You may also request the following forms:
   - Common land supplementary application form (ERDP/ES/COM1) (see Section 1.2.5 for guidance)
   - Agent authorisation form (ERDP/AUTH1) (see Section 1.3.10 for guidance)
   - Supplementary land ownership and control form (ERDP/ES/LDC1) (see Section 1.2.3 for guidance)

RDS will then send you the pre-filled application form and application maps that you need to prepare your postal application. See section 2 of this handbook for a step by step summary and detailed instructions for completing your postal application.
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1.1 Background

1.1.1 What is Environmental Stewardship?

Environmental Stewardship (ES) is a new agri-environment scheme which aims to secure widespread environmental benefits. The scheme has three elements:

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

**Entry Level Stewardship** (ELS) is a ‘whole farm scheme’ open to all farmers and land managers. Acceptance will be guaranteed providing you can meet the scheme requirements. If you have a mix of conventionally and organically farmed land, or all your land is farmed organically, you should apply for OELS (see below).

**Organic Entry Level Stewardship** (OELS) is a ‘whole farm scheme’ similar to ELS, open to farmers who manage all or part of their land organically and who are not receiving aid under the Organic Aid Scheme (OAS) or the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS). If any part of your farm is registered with an Organic Inspection Body, you should apply for OELS rather than ELS.

**Higher Level Stewardship** (HLS), which will be combined with ELS or OELS options, aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas. HLS is discretionary and concentrates on the more complex types of management where land managers need advice and support and where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances. To apply for HLS you will need a separate HLS application pack: this is available from your Rural Development Service (RDS) office. RDS contact details are provided in appendix 6 of this handbook.

1.1.2 What are the aims of Entry Level Stewardship?

ELS, including Organic Entry Level Stewardship, aims to encourage large numbers of farmers and land managers across England to deliver simple yet effective environmental management that goes beyond the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) requirement to maintain land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).

Defra has designed ELS, including its organic strand, to be simple to administer, with the minimum amount of paperwork. Anyone meeting all the scheme’s requirements will be accepted into the scheme.

If ELS is taken up across large areas of the countryside it will help to:

- Improve water quality and reduce soil erosion – by encouraging management which can help to meet these aims;
● **Improve conditions for farmland wildlife** – including birds, mammals, butterflies and bees;

● **Maintain and enhance landscape character** – by helping to maintain important features such as traditional field boundaries;

● **Protect the historic environment** – including archaeological features and artefacts.

### 1.1.3 Why encourage organic farming?

As a farming system organic farming has an important contribution to make alongside other sustainable farming methods as it seeks to work with natural processes, instead of controlling them to achieve a sustainable production system with limited use of external inputs. The potential for pollution and other environmental damage is lessened as organic farming avoids the use of artificial fertilisers and synthetic pesticides. It instead emphasises the role of crop rotation in helping to maintain soil fertility and to combat pests and disease problems and relies on the use of fertility building crops and natural fertilisers, such as animal manures.

In its report, *Farming and Food, A Sustainable Future* (published in January 2002), the Policy Commission on Farming and Food, led by Sir Don Curry, recognised the environmental benefits of organic farming. It endorsed providing ongoing public support for organic farming, targeted on its environmental benefits. It proposed that the best approach would be for it to be provided through a separate strand of Environmental Stewardship, which the Policy Commission recommended be put in place. This was followed up in the Defra Action Plan to develop organic food and farming in England (published in July 2002). This stated that ongoing support should be introduced first as an interim measure under the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) (it was added to the scheme in June 2003), followed by the development of a specific strand in the new structure of agri-environment schemes to be developed during 2002 to 2004.

In accordance with the Policy Commission’s and Action Plan’s recommendations, OELS will encourage a large number of organic farmers and land managers across a wide area of land to deliver simple yet effective environmental management on their organic units. At the same time, OELS will help encourage the expansion of organic production in England in order to help meet the increasing demand for organically produced food. OELS will play a vital role in helping to protect and enhance the environment as well as helping producers meet the demand for organic produce.
1.1.4 How does OELS differ from ELS?

OELS has basically the same design as ELS, but is open to farmers who manage either only organic land (ie land that is ‘fully organic’ or ‘in conversion’ to organic farming) or a mix of organic and conventional land and who are not receiving aid under the OAS or OFS. The list of organic management options is largely the same as for ELS, but some options have been excluded as they are unsuitable for organic systems (e.g. conservation headlands). Acceptance to the scheme will be guaranteed providing you meet all of its requirements, including that all of the organic land you wish to enter is registered with an Organic Inspection Body before you make your application and it remains continuously registered with an Organic Inspection Body for the full duration of your OELS agreement.

For the purposes of the scheme, your organic unit comprises all of the land listed on your annual certificates of registration and accompanying schedules issued by your Organic Inspection Body (ie it includes your fully organic land and any land ‘in conversion’) and it is this land which you should use to establish your OELS eligible land.

Your OELS eligible land is the land comprising your organic unit less any land in it which:

- is in a parcel of 15 ha or more which is located within the Less Favoured Area (LFA);
- is already subject to another scheme or obligations which are incompatible with the scheme (see Section 4 of this handbook);
- is not registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR) (see Section 1.2.1);
- is common land (see Section 1.2.5);
- is woodland which you choose to exclude from your application (see Section 1.2.1).

It is the area of your OELS eligible land which is used to establish your OELS points target. If you have a mix of both organic and conventional land on your farm you could qualify for an OELS payment on your OELS eligible land and ELS payments (at the applicable payment rates) on your ELS eligible land, as part of one, whole farm OELS agreement.

In order to do this there must be complete separation between the areas of land comprising your organic unit and your conventional unit.

For the purposes of OELS, any land (and associated field boundaries) you manage which is not in your organic unit will constitute your conventional unit.
Your **ELS eligible land** means the land comprising your conventional unit **less** any land in it which:

- is already subject to another scheme or obligations which are incompatible with the scheme (see Section 4 of this handbook);
- is common land (see Section 1.2.5);
- is not registered on the RLR (see Section 1.2.1);
- is woodland which you choose to exclude from your application (see Section 1.2.1).

Your ELS eligible land therefore includes land in the Less Favoured Area (LFA) in parcels of:

- more than 15 ha (whether or not it is farmed organically); and
- less than 15 ha (unless it is farmed organically).

It is the area of your ELS eligible land which is used to establish your **ELS points target**.

Once again, acceptance will be guaranteed providing you can meet all of the schemes requirements with regard to both the land comprising your organic unit and (where applicable) any conventional land that you manage on your conventional unit.

Under OELS you may also apply for conversion aid top up payments on established top fruit orchards (planted with pears, plums, cherries and apples excluding cider apples) and improved land as part of an OELS agreement (see section 1.1.9). Acceptance will be guaranteed providing this land is:

- registered as ‘in conversion’ to organic farming with an Organic Inspection Body before making an application under OELS;
- it is in its first year of conversion; and
has not been the subject of an agreement which provided for the payment of conversion aid and has not been previously converted to full organic production at any time since 10 August 1993.

1.1.5 What are the standards for organic farming?

For food to be sold as ‘organic’ it is necessary for it to be produced in accordance with specified standards established by Council Regulation 2092/91 (as amended) and set out in the UK Compendium of Organic Standards. 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 these standards are complied with. In order to apply for aid under the 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 5 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, including the current version of the EU and Compendium standards, can be obtained from the Organic Inspection Bodies or from Defra’s website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic.

1.1.6 What is my organic unit?

For the purposes of the scheme, your organic unit is all of the land listed on your annual certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules, issued by your Organic Inspection Body.

1.1.7 What is my commitment to farm organically?

For the purposes of the scheme you must:

- not already be receiving aid under either the Organic Aid or Organic Farming Schemes (OAS or OFS) on the land you wish to enter into the scheme. However, transfers from the OAS and OFS into OELS may be permitted in certain limited circumstances (see section 4.2 of this handbook for more details);
- register the land comprising your organic unit as either ‘in conversion’ to organic farming or ‘fully organic’ with an approved Organic Inspection Body before applying to enter the scheme;
- register yourself as an organic producer with an approved Organic Inspection Body before applying to enter the scheme;
already be farming the land comprising your organic unit in accordance with organic standards (further guidance on this is contained in section 1.1.5 and section 5.1 of this handbook) before applying to enter the scheme and continue to do so for the full duration of your agreement;

● provide copies of your current valid certificate(s) of registration and accompanying schedule(s) is issued by your Organic Inspection Body for all of the land comprising your organic unit with your OELS application and with your final year claim;

● ensure that you and all the land comprising your OELS eligible land remain registered with an Organic Inspection Body for the full duration of your agreement. If you wish to change Organic Inspection Bodies at any time during the life of your agreement, it is important that you re-register your land with a different Organic Inspection Body before you de-register from your existing one, so that there is continuity of registration;

● 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; and

● use the conversion aid top up payments for their intended purpose.

1.1.8 How does the scheme work?

Detailed instructions are provided later in this handbook, but in summary the scheme works as follows:

If you are applying for OELS, you will first have to prepare a simple record of features on your farm (called the Farm Environment Record). This will be done using the Farm Environment Record (FER) map supplied by RDS.

In order to complete your pre-filled application form and maps you will need to calculate the areas of land eligible to attract conversion aid top payments and establish an OELS points target for your OELS eligible land. If you have ELS eligible land, you will need to also establish a ELS points target (see section 1.3.3 for details). Your OELS and ELS points targets will relate to your farm size and will be directly related to the area of your OELS eligible and ELS eligible land. There is no minimum holding size for entry into OELS.

You will be able to choose from a wide range of options (e.g. hedgerow management, low input grassland, buffer strips, management plans and options to protect soils), covering all farming types. Each option will earn ‘points’ (e.g. 400 points per ha) towards your separate OELS and ELS points totals.

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 separate ‘points targets’. You will need to mark the location of some of these options on the Options map provided by RDS (see section 2
for details of how to mark up your map). If you agree to deliver enough OELS options on your OELS eligible land and ELS options on your ELS eligible land to meet your separate points targets and meet all scheme criteria you will be guaranteed entry into the scheme.

1.1.9 What payments will I receive?

You will be paid

- a flat rate payment of £60 per ha, per year for all of your OELS eligible land.
- a flat rate payment of £30 per ha, per year, for all of your ELS eligible land, with the following exception:
  - ELS eligible land in parcels of 15 ha or more within the LFA will be paid at a rate of £8 per ha, per year. This rate will apply even if you want to enter part of a 15 ha land parcel.

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

- £600 per ha, per year, for the first three years of your OELS agreement for areas of top fruit orchards (defined as pears, plums, and cherries and apples (excluding cider apples)). In order to be eligible under this land category at the time of application the trees must have been evenly planted in blocks to a minimum density of 80 trees per ha. Blocks should be a minimum of 0.5 ha in area; there is no maximum limit. This is to ensure that blocks are well distributed across the holding.

- £175 per ha, per year, for the first two years of your OELS agreement for areas of improved land (defined as land which has been ploughed or has received artificial fertiliser in the 20 years ending on the date of application to the Scheme which is not:
  a) a top fruit orchard;
  b) planted with mature trees or shrubs or planted to woodland or coppice, unless it is used for grazing or keeping livestock.

Subject to section 7.5 the payment rates you receive for OELS will remain the same for the duration of your agreement.

1.1.10 What will I be required to do?

In applying for, and being accepted into OELS, you will be agreeing to:

a) identify, map and retain your FER features (see section 2);
b) deliver the options selected in your application form in accordance with the management requirements set out in section 3; and

c) adhere to all the scheme terms and conditions contained in this handbook, and in particular to follow Good Farming Practice throughout your farm, and to comply with the other additional requirements contained in section 5.

1.1.11 How long will my agreement last?

Your agreement with Defra will be legally binding. It will run for five years 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.

1.1.12 Will my details be made public?

To meet our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 we need to explain how we will handle the information you give us.

Because Environmental Stewardship involves expenditure of public money, there is public interest in how the money is spent. Therefore Defra may in certain circumstances make information about your application and agreement publicly available for this purpose. We may also need to disclose details about your application and agreement to other organisations or individuals for administration, evaluation or monitoring purposes.

Details disclosed may include your name, the name of your farm or business, grid references, the total area under agreement, the payment you receive, the location of fields and details of the environmental features and management options they contain. Such information may be released upon request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1.1.13 Restrictions on applications including conversion aid

The amount of money available for conversion aid is determined in advance and we may temporarily suspend applications for conversion aid to avoid budgetary overrun. 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 a 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/ha ongoing payment under OELS, for which applications will continue to be accepted.
1.2 Who can apply?

OELS is open to all farmers and land managers who are:

- Freehold owners,
- Tenants, or
- Contractual licensees

Land entered into OELS and ELS management options must be agricultural or part of the farmed environment.

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

You must have management control of the land (see below) for the entire five years of your agreement. If you are not certain to have management control lasting five years, you can 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 1.2.3 of this handbook.

Please note that this and subsequent sections of this handbook refer to the land. Land for the purposes of OELS this simply means your OELS and ELS eligible land submitted under a single OELS application. Your application may include land registered under more than one holding number.

Common land is not eligible for the scheme (see section 1.2.5 of this handbook).

1.2.1 Registering my land on the Rural Land Register

All the land which you intend to enter into the scheme must be registered on the Rural Payment Agency (RPA) Rural Land Register (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 ensure that applications can be processed quickly and efficiently.

All management options must be on RLR registered land or along associated field boundaries.

Most farmers will already have been contacted by RPA and supplied with maps to confirm details about land parcels that are included on the RLR. Where this is not the case, you should contact RPA about registering your land before you apply (see appendix 6 for RPA contact details).

This is a whole farm scheme, so your single OELS 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.
If you are an existing agri-environment scheme agreement holder (e.g. OFS/OAS, Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) or Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS)), you do not need to register land already covered by your existing agreement, unless you intend to claim Single Payment Scheme payments on it.

Your farm may have some unregistered land, such as woodland, areas of scrub or unimproved grassland; you may wish to register this land so that it can be included in your application and contribute towards the payments you receive. Please check your registration information and contact RPA to register any unregistered parcels if necessary.

In order for this land to contribute towards your OELS points target and payment, it will also need to be registered with an Organic Inspection Body. If this land is not registered with an Organic Inspection Body, it would count towards your ELS points target and payment as part of a whole farm OELS agreement (see below).

If you have large areas of woodland (e.g. parcels over 10 ha), registered on the RLR, these will normally be included in your application and count towards your payment and separate points targets). However, where a large proportion of your land is covered by woodland, you may find it difficult to deliver enough options to reach your separate points targets. In this situation, you may choose to exclude the woodland parcels from your application, but you will not receive OELS payment for the excluded area. If you find it necessary to delete a woodland parcel, you should follow the instructions provided in section 2.3.1.

1.2.2 What is an RPA ‘vendor number’?

The ‘vendor number’ is a unique trader registration number allocated to you by the RPA so that you can receive payments. You must enter this number at section 1 of your application form. If you previously claimed payments under IACS or under an ERDP scheme (see appendix 6 for a list of ERDP schemes) you will have already been issued with a vendor number.

If you do not have a vendor number, you must obtain one from the RPA (contact details are provided in appendix 6 of this handbook).

1.2.3 What if I do not own some or all of the land?

If you are a tenant or contractual licensee you must discuss your application with your landlord to ensure that 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 five years to run, even if you are expecting a further extension, your landlord/the landowner must agree to take over in the event of your control lapsing. S/he must countersign your application to this effect. Alternatively, your landlord may apply for an agreement and discuss with you the delivery of the options and management required.
If you need to make a **countersigned application** you should discuss the proposal with the relevant person (e.g. 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 five years of your agreement.

If you have more than one tenancy with less than five years to run you will need to complete a supplementary land ownership and control form (ERDP/ES/LOC1) for each additional tenancy. These forms are available from your RDS office (see appendix 6) and are also available for you to download at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es.

### 1.2.4 Partnerships and trusts

If you are a partnership, trust, etc you can make an application, but Defra will not become involved in any disputes between individuals and you must comply with the following conditions:

a) 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.

b) The signatory must also sign any amendment and claim forms, where these are necessary.

c) The signatory must also take on the responsibility for delivery of the whole agreement.

d) 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.

e) 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.

f) The signatory will receive all the payments including any conversion aid top up payments claimed and must be responsible for paying back any grant if there is a breach of the agreement.
1.2.5 Is common land eligible?

Common land is not currently eligible for OELS.

However, common land is eligible for ELS, but you must be aware that Defra will not become involved in any disputes between commoners. Common land can only be entered into ELS as a separate application covering the whole common. If you farm both common land and other land you should make a separate application covering your other land (e.g. your in-bye land).

To apply for ELS on the common, you will need an ELS application pack. ELS background information and packs are available from your RDS Office (see appendix 6 of this handbook for contact details), and also available online at Defra website for you to download at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es.

1.2.6 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.

1.2.7 What if the land I farm is owned by the Crown, a local authority or another Exchequer funded body?

Land which is owned by the Crown, a local authority or another Exchequer funded body, but managed by a tenant, may be entered into OELS, providing the application does not include any environmental management which:

a) is a condition of that tenancy; or
b) is already required as part of the conservation responsibilities of the landlord.

In these situations, if you are the tenant, it is your responsibility to ensure that there is no overlap between the obligations you have as part of your tenancy or the obligations of your landlord, and any OELS and ELS management requirements.

Land owned and managed directly by the Crown, local authorities or another Exchequer funded body cannot be entered into the scheme, as these bodies are expected to manage their land in an environmentally friendly way and are therefore not eligible for payments for basic land management. Management above this basic level may be more appropriate for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). There are separate requirements for HLS which are described in the HLS handbook.
1.2.8 Do I have another scheme or obligation on my land?

As a general rule, Defra cannot pay you for management you are required to do under an existing scheme or obligation. Specific guidance on what to do if you have another scheme or obligation on your land is provided in section 4 of this handbook. The following table lists the contents of section 4. Please look through this list to check if any of the guidance applies to your land:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme or obligation</th>
<th>Section number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Payment Scheme (SPS)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Aid/Organic Farming Scheme (OAS/OFS)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Crops Scheme (ECS)</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS), Farm Woodland Scheme (FWS), Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Farm Allowance (HFA)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other land management schemes</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inheritance/Capital gains tax exemption</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm assurance schemes and the Pesticide Industry Voluntary Initiative</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrate Vulnerable Zones</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other obligations</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-farming activities on organic land</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 How do I apply?

1.3.1 How do I submit my application?

Once the land you wish to enter into the scheme is on the RLR (see section 1.2.1) you can apply for OELS by post.

If you wish to apply by post and have not received a pre-filled application form and maps, you must follow the instructions provided inside the front cover of this handbook. Once you have received your pre-filled application form and maps, section 2 of this handbook provides detailed instructions for completing your postal application.
1.3.2 When should I send in my application and when will my agreement start?

You should send in your application once you have completed your application form, marked up your maps and you are in receipt of your valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules. You can apply at any time, but if you want to choose a particular agreement start date you will have to submit your application by the deadline for that date.

For 2005 agreement start dates, and corresponding deadlines contact your RDS office. Contact details are provided at appendix 6 of this handbook or via www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es. Section 2.3.11 of this handbook provides a table showing agreement start dates and corresponding application deadlines for 2006 and following years.

1.3.3 How are my points targets calculated?

To calculate your OELS points target you will need to establish the area of your OELS eligible land in hectares. This area should be multiplied by 60 points per ha to give you your OELS points target.

To calculate your ELS points target you will need to establish the area of your ELS eligible land in hectares (excluding ELS eligible land in the LFA in parcels of 15 ha or more) and multiply this area by 30 points per ha to establish this element of your ELS points target.

If you have any ELS eligible land in the LFA in parcels of 15 ha or more, you will need to multiply this area of land by 8 points per ha and add these points to the figure above to establish your ELS points target.

1.3.4 How do I claim conversion aid top up payments?

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

- unimproved land;
- rivers, streams and ponds;
- outbuildings; and
- land planted with mature trees or shrubs or land planted to woodland or coppice (but you may include forage area within woodland if it is used for grazing or keeping livestock).
To claim conversion aid you will need to identify all the field parcels that are eligible in Annex 2 of your application form and record the eligible areas in one or more of the two conversion aid category columns; top fruit orchards and/or improved land.

You must only include those field parcels that are in their first year of conversion in your calculations. Any field parcels in their second (or more) year of conversion must be excluded from your calculations. Section 2.3.4 of this handbook explains how to calculate your conversion aid top ups in greater detail.

Remember that the field parcels on which you are claiming conversion aid must be listed as ‘in conversion’ on your certificate of registration and accompanying schedules, issued by your Organic Inspection Body.

1.3.5 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.

Supplied with your application maps will be a guidance note called ‘ELS/OELS: making the most of your options’. This note gives a short description of your local area, identifying characteristic landscape, wildlife and historic features, and identifies which options will deliver benefits that are particularly relevant to your land. This description may help you to choose which options to include in your application. In addition, you will be provided with an Environmental Information Map which may show features of particular historic, landscape or wildlife interest. You may find this map helpful when deciding which options to choose and where to locate them.

1.3.6 Can I have more than one option on the same area of land?

In a few instances you can have up to three land management options on the same area of organic land at the same time (i.e. OELS option OUI which is mandatory on all OELS eligible land parcels plus two others), but you cannot combine more than two options with OUI. In ELS, you can have up to two management options on the same area of conventional land, but you cannot combine more than two. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this handbook contains tables showing permitted combinations of OELS and ELS options. This rule does not apply to OELS or ELS management plans options; they may be applied to all field parcels included in your application, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for the management plan concerned, see pages 117 to 121 of this handbook.
1.3.7 Should I exceed my points targets?

Your OELS and ELS points targets and their associated payment rates are fixed. This means that there is not a 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, any issues arise over the eligibility of your options or your compliance with the option prescription. It is essential that you do not fall below your separate target points or you will be in breach of your agreement (see appendix 5 on penalties). However, you will not be paid any extra if you exceed your points targets.

If you feel that you would like to deliver a higher level of commitment than that required by Entry Level Stewardship, 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. However, there is no guarantee that an HLS application will be successful, because each one is subjected to a technical assessment of its benefit to the environment. If you want to apply for HLS you will need a separate application pack. These packs are available from your RDS office.

1.3.8 Will help be provided 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. RDS, and other organisations, will also be holding Environmental Stewardship Meetings and other events to explain the scheme and provide advice on applying. In addition, you will be able to contact advisers at your RDS office who will be able to help with general enquiries. If you wish to attend an ES Meeting you should contact your RDS office for the location of venues and availability of places. RDS contact details are provided in appendix 6 of this handbook.

1.3.9 Where can I get further advice on conversion to organic farming?

Advice and information concerning conversion to organic farming can be obtained from the Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS) Helpline which can be contacted on 0117 922 7707. You can arrange for a free visit by an adviser experienced in organic production and marketing, who will provide impartial advice relevant to your business. This service is only available to farmers thinking of converting land to organic production or existing organic farmers thinking of converting additional land for an entirely new organic enterprise.
Advice is also available from the Organic Inspection Bodies 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 of these can be obtained from the OCIS Helpline.

1.3.10 Can an agent act on my behalf?

The application process has been designed to be as simple as possible. It has been designed so that most applicants should feel confident enough to complete and submit the application themselves. 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. There is also a facility to enable your payments to be made to an agent.

To authorise an agent to act on your behalf in relation to any part of your agreement, you will need to complete and sign the relevant sections of the agent authorisation form (ERDP/AUTH1) which must be sent with your application. If you did not request an agent authorisation form with this handbook you can obtain one from your RDS office or download one from the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es. RDS contact details are provided in appendix 6 of this handbook.

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

1.3.11 What should I do if my certificates of registration haven’t arrived and I want to apply for conversion aid as part of my OELS agreement?

You should contact the Organic Inspection Body you are registered with. RDS will not get involved in any disputes between Organic Inspection Bodies and licensees over certification issues.

1.3.12 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 (e.g. pollen and 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.
1.3.13 What happens next?

Once your application has been received by RDS, 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 copies of your current, valid certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules have been provided. If it passes these simple checks RDS 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.

1.3.14 When and how will I be paid?

If you are accepted into OELS, you will receive a payment every six months of your agreement. Each six 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 end of the final year 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 a copy of that year’s current, valid certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules for all of the land comprising your organic unit.

1.3.15 The Environmental Impact Assessment (Uncultivated Land and Semi-natural Areas) (England) Regulations 2001

These Regulations seek to protect environmentally important land from agricultural intensification. Land managers are required to seek approval from Defra 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 EIA helpline on 0800 028 2140.
2.1 To apply by post

OELS applications must be submitted by post. If you have not received the pre-filled application form and maps described below, you must follow the instructions provided inside the front cover of this handbook.

To apply by post, you will need the following:

- **A personalised application form** which has been pre-filled with information about you and your land, including RLR field numbers and areas.

Your maps as follows:

- **Environmental Information Map** showing designations on your land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Scheduled Monuments, and Less Favoured Areas. This will allow you to identify high priority features on your land which would benefit from the introduction of some of the scheme options.

- **Farm Environment Record (FER) map.** This map of your land should be used to prepare your FER (see section 2.3.2 and example FER map included with this handbook), and should be returned with your application form.

- **Options map.** This map of your land should be used to mark where you are putting your scheme options (see sections 2.3.6, 2.3.9 and 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 RDS office with your marked up **FER** and **Options** maps together with copies of your current valid certificate(s) of organic registration and accompanying schedule(s). Detailed instructions and guidance on how to complete the application form and how to prepare the maps are provided below. The flow chart at section 2.2 overleaf provides a step by step summary of the application process.

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 RDS.
2.2 Step by step summary of how to apply by post

Please check your certificate(s) of organic registration and accompanying schedule(s) and read sections 1, 2 and 4 of this handbook to make sure you and your land is eligible, before you start to complete your application.

**STEP 1**
Check that your maps cover the correct area and that the pre-filled details on your application form are accurate. Check that your RLR field numbers and areas on your field data sheet at annex 2 of your application form are accurate (see section 2.3.1)

**STEP 2**
Complete your Farm Environment Record (FER) by marking the features on your land on your FER map (see section 2.3.2)

**STEP 3**
Identify and record on your FER map any fields that are at risk from soil erosion or run-off (see section 2.3.3)

**STEP 4**
Calculate the areas of land eligible to attract conversion aid top up payments and complete annex 2 of your application form (see section 2.3.4)

**STEP 5**
Calculate your points target for your OELS eligible land (see section 2.3.5)

**STEP 6**
Choose from the list of OELS options and complete annexes 1a and 2 of your application form, and mark your OELS option choices on your options map (see section 2.3.6)

**STEP 7**
Check that you have met or exceeded your points target on your OELS eligible land (see section 2.3.7)

**STEP 8**
Repeat steps 5 to 7 your ELS eligible land (see sections 2.3.8 to 2.3.10)

**STEP 9**
Choose your preferred agreement start date and tick the relevant box in section 2 of your application form (see section 2.3.11)

**STEP 10**
Make sure you have read and understood all the terms and conditions contained in this handbook before reading and signing section 4: Declarations and undertakings on your application form (see section 2.3.12)
Submit your application to your RDS office in the envelope provided
2.3 How to fill in your application form and mark your maps

Please read sections 1, 2 and 4 of this handbook to make sure you and your land are eligible, before you start to complete your application.

2.3.1 Step 1: Check your pre-filled details and maps

Please note that if your application is approved it will form part of your legal agreement with Defra. Therefore, do not use correcting fluid, and if you have to make any alterations to your application form they must be made in block capitals using black ink and be initialled by you.

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 – Your field data sheet: In order to enter OELS, you will need to agree to carry out a programme of environmental management activities taken from the list of management options in section 3 of this handbook. Each option is worth a certain number of ‘points’. In order for your land to qualify for entry into the scheme you must reach a separate total target number of points on both your OELS eligible land and on any ELS eligible land that you farm. Your points targets also represent the payment (in £s) you will receive under the scheme each year.

It is your responsibility to ensure that all the land listed at annex 2, and identified on your maps, is actually eligible for the scheme by carefully studying the rules on eligibility in sections 1 and 4 of this handbook.

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

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

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

a) 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.
b) 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 your RDS office and ask them to send you a replacement application form and map/s covering the correct field parcels.

2.3.2 Step 2: Complete your Farm Environment Record

You will need:

- Section 3 and 4 and annexes 1a and 1b of your application form
- Your Farm Environment Record (FER) map/s
- The example FER map which will help to show you how to mark your map (included with this handbook)

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. 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 which require marking on your FEP map/s.

You will receive three points per ha of land for completing your FER and retaining all your FER features for the lifetime of your agreement. You should 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) Calculate your total OELS eligible land area in hectares and record this figure in table A at section 3 of the application form.

b) Multiply your total OELS eligible land area by three 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 step 6 of the application process).

c) Calculate your total ELS eligible land area in hectares and (if any) record this figure at table C at section 4 of the application form.

d) Multiply your total ELS eligible land area by three to give your points score for your FER on the your ELS eligible land. Record your points score in the top row of the table at annex 1b of the application form (See step 9 of the application process).
2.3.3 Step 3: Identify fields where soil erosion and run-off occur, or may do so in the future

You will need:

- **Your Farm Environment Record (FER) map.**
- **Annex 2** of your application form (your field data sheet).

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 page 117 of this handbook for further information on soil erosion.

**First identify where soil erosion and run-off occurs:**

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
- 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, 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
- 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, you should consider choosing the option to prepare a Soil Management Plan (OM1/EM1). You could also consider the management options to reduce run-off and soil erosion. See page 117 of this handbook.
2.3.4 Step 4: 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 to identify the fields parcels which are eligible and on which you wish to claim conversion aid. Instructions and guidance on how to complete annex 2 are provided on pages 32 and 33.

Please remember to complete the questions relating to your organic enterprise in the application form as follows:

a) Decide what your **primary** organic enterprise is and enter a ‘1’ in the corresponding box.

b) 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 denote what their **secondary** organic enterprise is.
How to complete annex 2 of your OELS Field Data Sheet: conversion aid

To apply for conversion aid complete steps A to D:

**Step A** Put a tick in this column to indicate that the field is registered as ‘in conversion’ with an Organic Inspection Body and is eligible to attract conversion aid (see section 1.3.4) under the OELS.

**Step B** Enter the net area of each field (in ha) eligible to attract conversion aid top up in one or both of the ‘Conversion Aid’ columns (round measurements to the nearest 0.01 ha (100m²)).

**Step C** If the field contains more than one category of land eligible for conversion aid, the different areas should be recorded in the appropriate columns.

**Step D** Calculate the total area of each category of conversion aid and record these figures in the row marked ‘Total amount (ha/no)’. These total areas, when multiplied by the appropriate conversion aid land category payment rates, represent the annual payments you will receive in years 1 and 2 (for improved land) and years 1, 2 and 3 (for top fruit orchards) of your agreement.
### non-rotational options within fields

have chosen into this data sheet. A list of the options available is provided in the OELS Handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVERSION AD</th>
<th>OELS/EOLS OPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved land (ha)</td>
<td>Total (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.12</td>
<td>19.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If necessary, please continue on additional sheets and indicate in the box how many have been attached. 

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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.
2.3.5 Step 5: Calculating 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 section 1.1.4 and Section 4.2 for details of the land that can be entered into the OELS). If you have already ticked this box as a result of claiming conversion aid top up 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 into table A at section 3.

c) Complete table A by multiplying this figure by 60 and record the result in the column headed ‘point target’ in Table A. **The result is your points target on your OELS eligible land.**

2.3.6 Step 6: 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.**

- **The example Options map** which will help to show you how to mark your map (included with this handbook).

In this handbook, read **section 3: ‘List of options, management requirements and points allocations’** to find out which OELS options can be included on your OELS eligible land. You will see that there are a wide range of options designed for a variety of farming systems. 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 Farm Environment Record and the separate sheet entitled ‘ELS/OELS: making the most of your options’ (included with this handbook). 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:

a) Enter the area of the fields eligible for OELS into the column labelled ‘OU1 Organic management’ on annex 2.

b) Calculate the total area of option OU1 and record this figure in the row marked ‘total amount (ha/no.)’ on annex 2.

c) Write the code OU into each of these fields on your options map.

For all other OELS options you wish to locate on your OELS 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 colour for that option group as specified on the Options map key. Do not mark rotational and management plan options on your Options map – these are recorded at annex 1a, see page 38.

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

If you have any Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Energy Crops Scheme (ECS) or Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme (ESAs) agreement land, please follow these instructions:

As indicated by the Options map key, mark the location of non-rotational agreement land (e.g. existing grass margins, 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 ESAs option covers a whole field, the field concerned is not eligible for the scheme (see Step 1 (section 2.3.1) and sections 4.5 to 4.6 for details).

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 management plan options. Instructions and guidance on how to complete annex 1a are provided on the following pages.

Use annex 2 (the field data sheet) for OELS non-rotational options within fields (e.g. for buffer strips and blocks of wild bird seed mixture). Instructions and guidance on how to complete annex 2 are provided on pages 32 and 33. Do not use annex 2 to record OELS rotational options.
How to complete annex 1a

To record Boundary Options OB1 to OB11 and OC3 follow steps A to C:

**Step A** Measure the total length of the option concerned. Record all measurements to the nearest metre. *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.*

**Step B** Record the measurement at annex 1a.

**Step C** Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the ‘your points’ column at annex 1a.

To record rotational options:
Assess the area of land to be managed under the rotational option and follow *Steps B* and *C* above. Record the area measurement in hectares to the nearest 0.01 ha (for Skylark plots, OF8, record the number of plots).

Do not mark the location of OELS rotational options on the Options Map/s, 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:

OELS rotational options:
- OF6 Over-wintered stubbles
- OF8 Skylark plots
- OG1 Under sown spring cereals
- OG4 Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles
- OG5 Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles
- OJ2 Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion

To record management plan options:
Calculate the area of land covered by the management plan and follow *Steps B* and *C* above. Record the area measurement in hectares to the nearest 0.01 ha.
Annex 1a. Please record your choice of OELS boundary, rotational and management plan options on the table below. (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>1150 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 hedge management)</td>
<td>38 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB9</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB2 hedge management)</td>
<td>26 per 100m</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB10</td>
<td>Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3 hedge management)</td>
<td>56 per 100m</td>
<td>1500 m</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<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>4 per 100m</td>
<td>m</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>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>OG5</td>
<td>Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>110 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 sown spring cereals</td>
<td>150 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM1</td>
<td>Soil management plan</td>
<td>3 per ha</td>
<td>54 ha</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM2</td>
<td>Nutrient management plan</td>
<td>2 per ha</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM3</td>
<td>Manure management plan</td>
<td>2 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

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 at annex 1a.
Using Annex 2: Your OELS/ELS Field Data Sheet

How to calculate your area of OELS eligible land and record your choice of OELS non-rotational options within fields:

**Step A:** Place a tick in this column against all RLR fields that are eligible for OELS.

**Step B:** Record the area of each OELS eligible field in the corresponding row of the OUES column (to the nearest 0.01 ha (100 m²)).

**Step C:** Calculate the total area of the all of the fields that are eligible for OELS and record it in box 1, and in table A at section 3.

**Step D:** Write the code of your chosen OELS option at the top of one of the options columns.

**Step E:** Work out the amount of this option for each field parcel you have decided to put it in and record these amounts in the corresponding row of the ‘OELS/ELS options column’. For each entry calculate the area in hectares (to the nearest 0.01 ha (100 m²)) or the number of trees (for OC1 and OC2 – Protection of in-field trees) See the worked example below.

**Step F:** Calculate the total amount of your option for all field parcels and record this figure in the row marked ‘Total amount (ha/no)’.

**Step G:** Record the points per hectare or number available for the option in the row marked ‘OELS points per unit’ e.g. for OES you would enter 500.

**Step H:** Calculate how many points the option has contributed towards your total points target. Record this value to the nearest whole point in the row marked ‘OELS points’.

**Example:** This shows the entry for a 4 m buffer strip of 1,125 m in length. This measurement has been converted to hectares, to the nearest 0.01 ha. An example calculation is provided below:

A 4 m wide buffer strip of 1,125 m in length would occupy (4 x 1,125) 4,500 m².
A hectare is 10,000 m² so the area occupied in hectares is 0.450 ha (4,500 ÷ 10,000).
This would be recorded at annex 2 as 0.45 ha (to the nearest 0.01 ha).
See appendix 3 for more details on how to convert buffer strip lengths to hectares.
## Organic Entry Level Stewardship Handbook

### How to complete your application

#### non-rotational options within fields

That you have chosen into this data sheet. A list of the options available is provided in the OELS Handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick of eligible for OELS</th>
<th>Improved land (ha)</th>
<th>Top fruit (ha)</th>
<th>OELS organic management (ha)</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>OELS</th>
<th>OK1</th>
<th>OF2</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
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<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>Amount (ha/No.)</th>
<th>Total ELS/OELS points (this sheet)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ 23.12</td>
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<td>✔ 5.33</td>
<td>4.94</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To calculate the OELS points multiply the total amount (ha/number) by the OELS points per ha or number.

In this case the option is take field corners out of management, Option code OK1, so the calculation is:

\[
0.5 \text{ ha} \times 500 \text{ points/ha} = 250 \text{ points}
\]

Once you have recorded all your OELS non-rotational options within fields you must calculate your total ‘OELS points’ for the options you have chosen and record this figure at the base of the ‘OELS points’ column in box 4.
2.3.7 Step 7: 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 options and completed steps 5 and 6, you should calculate the total points accumulated.

a) 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.

b) Add totals from annex 1a and annex 2 to determine your Total Points on your OELS eligible land and record this in table B. This figure must meet or exceed your OELS Points Target (table A of section 3) to make you eligible for the scheme.

Remember that you are responsible for ensuring that all of the options listed at annex 1a and 2 of your application form are delivered. This information forms the basis of your agreement with Defra.

2.3.8 Step 8: Calculating your points target on your ELS eligible land

You will need:

- Section 4, annex 1b and annex 2 of your application form.

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

Calculate your ELS points target as follows:

a) See section 1.1.4 and section 4 for details of the land that can be entered into the ELS element of your OELS 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 fields that are in the LFA and of 15 ha or more. 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 within the LFA and of 15 ha or more. Write this figure in box 3 at the bottom of the Field Data Sheet and into 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.

### 2.3.9 Step 9: Choose which options to include on your ELS eligible land

You will need:

- Annexes 1b and 2 and section 3 of your application form.
- Your Options map.
- The example Options map which will help to show you how to mark your map (included in the back pocket of this handbook).

In this handbook, read section 3: ‘List of options, management requirements and points allocations’ to find out which options can be located on your ELS eligible land. You will see that there is a wide range of options designed for a variety of farming systems. 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 Farm Environment Record and the separate sheet entitled ‘ELS/OELS: making the most of your options’ (included with this handbook). This information may help you to decide which options to choose and where to locate them.

**For each option you wish to locate on your ELS eligible land you must:**

a) Decide where the option is to be located on your 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 colour for that option group as specified on the Options map key. Do not mark rotational and management plan options on your Options map – these are recorded at annex 1b, see page 46.

c) Write the appropriate option code, using a fine black pen, on or against the option in each place that you have marked it on your Options map/s.
If you have any Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Energy Crops Scheme (ECS) or Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme (ESAs) agreement land, please follow these instructions:

As indicated by the Options map key, mark the location of non-rotational agreement land (e.g. existing grass margins, 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 ESAs option covers a whole field, the field concerned is not eligible for the scheme (see Step 1 (section 2.3.1) and sections 4.5–4.7 for details).

Having marked your Options map/s you will now need to record your choices, and calculate the points you have accumulated for your ELS eligible land, using annexes 1b and 2 of your application form.

Use annex 1b for ELS boundary, rotational and management plan. Instructions and guidance on how to complete annex 1b are provided on pages 46 and 47.

Use annex 2 (the field data sheet) for ELS non-rotational options within fields (e.g. for buffer strips and blocks of wild bird seed mixture). Instructions and guidance on how to complete annex 2 are provided on pages 48 and 49. Do not use annex 2 to record ELS rotational options.
Organic Entry Level Stewardship Handbook
How to complete your application
How to complete annex 1b

To record Boundary Options EB1 to EB11 and EC3 follow steps A to C:

**Step A** Measure the total length of the option concerned. Record all measurements to the nearest metre. 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.

**Step B** Record the measurement at annex 1b.

**Step C** Convert the measurement to points, to the nearest whole point, and record this figure in the ‘your points’ column at annex 1b.

To record rotational options:

Assess the area of land to be managed under the rotational option and follow steps B and C above. Record the area measurement in hectares to the nearest 0.01 ha (for Skylark plots, EF8, record the number of plots).

Do not mark the location of ELS rotational options on the Options map/s, 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:

**ELS rotational options:**
- EF6 Over-wintered stubbles
- EF8 Skylark plots
- EF9 Conservation headlands in cereal fields
- EF10 Conservation headlands in cereal field with no fertilisers or manure
- EG1 Under sown spring cereals
- EG4 Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles
- EG5 Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles
- EJ2 Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion

To record management plan options:

Calculate the area of land covered by the management plan and follow steps B and C above. Record the area measurement in hectares to the nearest 0.01 ha.
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 ‘your points’ column at annex 1b.
Using annex 2: Your OELS/ELS Field Data Sheet

How to calculate your area of ELS eligible land (if any) and record your choice of ELS non-rotational options within field follow steps A to G:

**Step A** Calculate the total area of all the fields that are eligible for ELS, excluding those that are in the LFA and are of 15 ha or more and record this figure in box 2 of Annex 2 and in table C at section 4 of your application form.

**Step B** Where necessary, calculate the area of the all of the fields that are in the LFA and of 15 ha or more and record this figure in box 3 of Annex 2 and in table C at section 4 of the application form.

**Step G** Calculate how many points the option has contributed towards your total points target. Record this value to the nearest whole point in the row marked ‘ELS points’.

Example: This shows the entry for a 4 m buffer strip of 2,324 m in length. This measurement has been converted to hectares, to the nearest 0.01 ha. An example calculation is provided below:

A 4 m wide buffer strip of 2,324 m in length would occupy (4 x 2.324) 9.296 m². A hectare is 10,000 m² so the area occupied in hectares is 0.450 ha (9.296 ÷ 10,000). This would be recorded at annex 2 as 0.93 ha (to the nearest 0.01 ha).

See appendix 3 for more details on how to convert buffer strip lengths to hectares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annexe 2. Field Data Sheet for OELS/ELS non-rotational options within fields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field No.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 5678 9024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 5698 0456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6845 6572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6833 6570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6810 6529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6850 6571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6790 6278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XY 6790 6590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once you have recorded all your ELS non-rotational options within fields you must calculate your total ‘ELS points’ for the options you have chosen and record this figure at the base of the ‘ELS’ points column in box 5.
2.3.10 Step 10: Check that you have met your points target on your ELS eligible land

You will need:

- Annexes 1b and 2 and section 3 of the application form.

Once you have chosen your ELS options and completed steps 8 and 9, you should calculate the total ELS points that you have accumulated.

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 in table D. This figure must meet or exceed your Total ELS Points Target (table C of section 4) to make this land eligible for the scheme.

Remember that you are responsible for ensuring that all the options listed at annex 1b and 2 of your application form are delivered. This information forms the basis of your agreement with Defra.

Please note: you must meet or exceed your OELS points target and your separate ELS points target for your application to be successful.

If you applied for conversion aid top up payments as part of your application for OELS and it was rejected because you were unable to meet or exceed your separate points targets, conversion aid top ups will not be paid.
2.3.11 Step 11: 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.

Agreements will automatically be given the earliest possible start date unless you specify a particular one. However, to guarantee a particular start date, your application must be submitted to RDS by the appropriate application deadline.
For 2005, the agreement start dates, and corresponding application deadlines, are available from your RDS office and on the internet at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es. For 2006 and following years, the agreement start dates, and corresponding application deadlines, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application deadline from 1 November 2005</th>
<th>Agreement start date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 September</td>
<td>1 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December</td>
<td>1 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td>1 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>1 November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.12 Step 12: Declarations and undertakings

You will need to study:

Sections 2 and 5 of the application form carefully.

Please read, complete and sign the declaration at section 5 of your application form.

If you wish to make a countersigned application (see section 1.2.3 of this handbook), you will need to get the relevant person (e.g. the freehold owner, your landlord, the person whose land you farm) 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 (ERDP/AUTH1). These forms are available from your RDS office, and also available to download from the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es. RDS contact details are provided in Appendix 6 of this handbook.

Please return the following to your RDS 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 Farm Environment Record 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.
If you are making an application for common land under ELS you will also need to complete and return the relevant form (see section 1.2.5 of this handbook).

You are advised to retain a copy of your completed application form.

2.4 What will I receive if my application has been successful?

If your application has been completed accurately and you have met your separate points targets, RDS will send you a letter confirming your acceptance into the scheme. The letter will also confirm the following:

- Your agreement start date
- 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
- Summary details of the land entered into conversion and attracting conversion aid top ups

Your 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.
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 ELS eligible land. Each option is worth a certain number of points per unit of area (e.g. buffer strip options), or length (e.g. hedge management options), or number (e.g. 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 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:

- **Black text** – these instructions must be followed irrespective of whether the land is eligible for OELS or ELS;
- **Green text** – this element of the prescription must be followed on your OELS eligible land only;
- **Brown text** – this element of the prescription 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, if you experience any difficulty distinguishing between the various colours used to differentiate between OELS and ELS management requirements in the following section, please contact your local RDS Office for a black and white copy of the OELS and ELS prescriptions printed in an accessible format for those with visual impairment difficulties.
3.1 Summary table – OELS and ELS options and points available

<table>
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<td>OU1</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>OPTIONS FOR BOUNDARY FEATURES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OB1/EB1</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (on both sides of hedge)</td>
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<td>OB2/EB2</td>
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<td>OB3/EB3</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB4/EB4</td>
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<tr>
<td>OB5/EB5</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side</td>
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<td>OB6/EB6</td>
<td>Ditch management</td>
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<td>OB7/EB7</td>
<td>Half ditch management</td>
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<td>OB8/EB8</td>
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<td><strong>OPTIONS FOR TREES AND WOODLAND</strong></td>
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<td>OC1/EC1</td>
<td>Protection of in-field trees – rotational/arable land</td>
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<td>OC2/EC2</td>
<td>Protection of in-field trees – grassland</td>
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<td>ED2</td>
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<td>ED3</td>
<td>Reduce cultivation depth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OD4/ED4</td>
<td>Management of scrub on archaeological sites</td>
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<td>OD5/ED5</td>
<td>Archaeological features on grassland</td>
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### OPTIONS FOR BUFFER STRIPS AND FIELD MARGINS

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<td>2 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>OE4</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<tr>
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<td>OE6</td>
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<td>EE7</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in improved grassland</td>
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<td>Buffering in-field ponds in arable land</td>
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<td>OE8</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in rotational land</td>
<td>ha</td>
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### OPTIONS FOR ARABLE LAND

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<td>EF3</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture on set-aside land</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>EF4</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar flower mixture</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>OF4</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar flower mixture</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>EF5</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar flower mixture on set-aside land</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>EF6</td>
<td>Over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>Over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>EF7</td>
<td>Beetle banks</td>
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<td>580</td>
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<td>Beetle banks</td>
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<td>EF8</td>
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<tr>
<td>OF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>ha/plot</td>
<td>5 per plot</td>
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<td>EF9</td>
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<td>EF10</td>
<td>Conservation headlands in cereal fields with no fertilisers or manure</td>
<td>ha</td>
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<td>EF11</td>
<td>6 m Uncropped, cultivated margins on arable land</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>400</td>
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List of options, management requirements and points allocations

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<tr>
<td>EG1</td>
<td>Under sown spring cereals</td>
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<td>EG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
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<td>OG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>EG3</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar seed mixtures in grassland areas</td>
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<td>OG3</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar seed mixtures in grassland areas</td>
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<td>Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
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<td>Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
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<td>OL3/EL3</td>
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3.2 Detailed management requirements for OELS and ELS options

Some of the option details below refer to an ‘Environmental Information map’ – see section 2.1 for more details.

**Option OU1 Organic Management**

This option must be located on all of your OELS eligible land. It cannot be located on ELS eligible land.

Managing the land according to organic standards provides bio-diversity gains both within fields and around field margins. You must:

- not use synthetic nitrogen fertilisers;
- utilise diverse crop rotations on mixed farms. This will contribute to soil fertility and to bio-diversity at both a macro and micro scale;
- limit applications of animal manure nitrogen on farm to an average of 170 kg/ha per year even outside Nitrate Vulnerable Zones thus reducing the potential for nitrate leaching or the run off nutrients or pathogenic organisms to watercourses;
- only apply those herbicides, pesticides and fungicides permitted for use on land registered with an Organic Inspection Body under Council Regulation 2092/91 and the Defra Compendium of Organic Standards (see section 5.1).
- Undertake organic management on all the land for which you claim OELS options; and
- Maintain the organic registration of the land with an Organic Inspection Body recognised by Defra, as being fully organic or in conversion.

**OU1, 30 points per ha**

Organic farming methods work with natural processes and make limited use of external inputs.
Hedgerow management options

Hedges and hedgebanks are important elements of the countryside as landscape and historic features, for wildlife habitat, and for stock management and shelter. Hedgerow management options may be applied to hedges that are in management by regular trimming (including sides) or on a traditional hedge-laying or coppicing cycle. You cannot use more than one hedgerow management option on the same length of hedge.

OB1 & OB2 Hedgerow Management on both sides/ one side of the hedge

For this option you must do the following:

- Hedges should be maintained to a height, which is customary to the local landscape, but not less than 1.5 m. A mixture of heights and widths will provide the best range of habitat. (You may use this option to manage hedges that are less than 1.5 m high at the start of the agreement, but in this case the hedge should be allowed to grow up to the required height.)

- Do not cultivate or apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides to land within 2 m of the centre of the hedge.

- Hedge banks should be maintained in a style that is customary to the area.

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

- Do not cut during the bird breeding season (1 March to 31 July).

- Hedgelaying/coppicing should be completed before 1 March. However, in exceptional circumstances work may continue up to 1 April, provided that you conduct a survey to ensure 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.

- Where the hedge includes gaps, these may be included in the length measurement, providing they amount to no more than 20% of the total length of that particular hedge.

- Road and trackside hedges are eligible. For public safety, the side of the hedge and margin next to a road or enclosed public path may be trimmed more frequently.
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.

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

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

**OB1, 22 points per 100m, where management is carried out on both sides of the hedge**

**OB2, 11 points per 100m, where management is carried out on one side of the hedge**

**EB1, 22 points per 100m, where management is carried out on both sides of the hedge**

**EB2, 11 points per 100m, where management is carried out on one side of the hedge**

**OB3 Enhanced hedgerow management**

**EB3 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 you must:**

- Maintain hedges to a height, which is customary to the local landscape, but no less than 2 m. A mixture of heights and widths will provide the best range of habitat. You may use this option to manage hedges that are less than 2 m high at the start of the agreement, but in this case the hedge should be allowed to grow up to the required height.

- Cut no more than one third of your hedges each calendar year and do not cut them between 28 February and 1 September.
- Cut each hedge/hedge bank no more than once every three calendar years. Where necessary for public safety, the side of the hedge next to a road or enclosed public path may be trimmed more frequently.

**OB3, 42 points per 100m**

**EB3, 42 points per 100m**

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**OB4 & OB5 Stone-faced hedge bank management on both sides/one side**

**EB4 & EB5 Stone-faced hedge bank management on both sides/one side**

For this option you must do the following:

- Protect stone-faced banks from deterioration i.e. repair gaps where these occur during the course of the agreement.
- Prevent damage to stone-faced gateways and banks by machinery or stock climbing. Where stock have damaged such features, prevent further damage taking place by making them stock-proof.
- Do not remove any in situ stone from banks.
- Where there is hedge growth on top of the bank, you may also apply for options OB1, OB2 or OB3. 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 100m on stone-faced hedge bank management on both sides
OB5, 8 points per 100m on stone-faced hedge bank management on one side
EB4, 16 points per 100m on stone-faced hedge bank management on both sides
EB5, 8 points per 100m on stone-faced hedge bank management on one side

OB6 Ditch management

EB6 Ditch management

The aim of this option is to establish a varied bank side and aquatic vegetation and to provide undisturbed wildlife habitat adjacent to the ditch. Eligible ditches 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 (IDBs) are not eligible. Streams that are unmanaged or occasionally managed natural features are not eligible. Moorland grips are not eligible.

For this option you must do the following:

● You must not cultivate or apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides to land with 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 ditch banks, cut them in rotation so that a ditch bank is not cut more than once in two years.

● Where necessary to prevent flooding, 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 your bank.

Any dredging or spoil must be levelled along the bank and the bankside vegetation re-established by natural regeneration.

Do not move or re-profile the ditch.

**OB6, 24 points per 100m**

**EB6, 24 points per 100m**

**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 bankside vegetation.

For ditches in this option you must do 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, manures 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.

- Use only mechanical means (including hand tools) to trim your bank.

- Any dredging or spoil should be levelled along the bank and bank side vegetation established by natural regeneration.

**OB7, 8 points per 100m**

**EB7, 8 points per 100m**

**OB8/9/10 Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating option OB1/OB2/OB3)**

**EB8/9/10 Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating option EB1/EB2/EB3)**

This option is available for hedges with a ditch immediately alongside, where the ditch contains standing or flowing water. You must have control over the management of adjacent land. The aim is to establish a diverse hedgerow, bank side and aquatic vegetation.
You must apply for these options (OB8/9/10 and EB8/9/10) where i.e. you have a hedge alongside a ditch and you wish to manage both under the scheme (you cannot combine for individual hedge or ditch options).

Follow the conditions for:

- **OB1, OB2 or OB3** depending on whether you are managing one side of your hedge, or both sides; and **OB6** (Ditch management).
- **EB1, EB2 or EB3** depending on whether you are managing one side of your hedge, or both sides; and **EB6** (Ditch management).

In addition you must do the following:

- On the non-hedge side of the ditch you must not cultivate or apply fertiliser, manures 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 hedge, you must leave 1 m uncultivated land extending 2 m from the centre of the hedge on the non-ditch side of the hedge. You must not apply fertilisers, manures or pesticides to this land.

**Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3/EB3 hedge management)**
OB8, 38 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB1 hedge management)

OB9, 26 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB2 hedge management)

OB10, 56 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating OB3 hedge management)

EB8, 38 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB1 hedge management)

EB9, 26 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB2 hedge management)

EB10, 56 points per 100m for combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB3 hedge management)

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. Stonewalls 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 (i.e. walls still at their original height and with their coping stones in place).
For this option you must do the following:

- Protect stone walls from deterioration, i.e. regularly repair gaps where these occur during the course of your agreement.
- All repair and maintenance work should be carried out in the traditional materials used in the original wall construction, following the style characteristic to the local landscape.
- Do not remove any in situ stone from walls.

**OB11, 15 points per 100m**

**EB11, 15 points per 100m**

Bloody nosed beetle on meadowsweet
Options for Trees and Woodland

OC1 & OC2 Protection of in-field trees – rotational land/organic grassland

EC1 & EC2 Protection of in-field trees – arable/grassland

Trees are of historic and landscape significance in both arable and grassland situations, and also provide habitat for many invertebrates and birds. To be eligible for this option the trunk of the tree must be entirely within the field, i.e. 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, and is not in a line of more than three trees with overlapping canopies.

For this option you must do the following:

- Eligible trees are those over 30 cm diameter at chest height. This option can be applied to groups of up to three trees, where the tree canopies are overlapping. In this situation, each tree will earn the specified number of points.

- 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 below the canopy.

- Do not spread fertiliser or manure beneath the tree canopy. Do not spread fertiliser, farmyard manure or in-organic N, P or K 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

EC3 Maintenance of woodland fences

This option will protect woodland flora and encourage natural regeneration. Woodlands may be of historical interest and are significant features contributing to the local landscape character.

- Maintain fences in a stockproof condition to ensure exclusion of livestock. Avoid damaging woodland boundary banks.
- Stock must be excluded from the woodland.

**OC3, 4 points per 100m**

**EC3, 4 points per 100m**

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

EC4 Management of woodland edges

Hedges and shrubs in the woodland edge provide habitat for small mammals and birds. This option is designed to encourage the woodland edge to grow out and requires 2 m to be left uncultivated from the edge of the wood. Buffer strip options may be located adjacent to these woodland edge areas.

For this option you must do the following:

- Do not cultivate within 2 m of the woodland edge and allow the woodland edge to grow out for up to 2 m.
- Do not supplementary feed or locate water troughs and mineral licks in such a way as to cause poaching on the woodland strip.
- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal. Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious grass weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- Do not apply fertilisers or manure.
- Cutting is only permitted for the control of the above weeds. Trim no more than one third of the shrubby growth in any one calendar year.

**OC4, 380 points per ha**

**EC4, 380 points per**
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 countryside.

Before considering these options, please look carefully at your Environmental Information map, which has been supplied by RDS. 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 map and label them, including listed and unlisted traditional buildings. You can obtain further information and guidance from a leaflet entitled ‘Farming the Historic Landscape: Entry Level Stewardship’. This leaflet is available from www.helm.org.uk.

If you have historic features (including archaeological sites and traditional farm buildings) on your farm, you must meet the relevant scheme conditions detailed at section 5.7 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.

Protection of archaeological features

Archaeological features, both individual sites such as barrows, settlement sites or hill forts and 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 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.

Please note that it is a requirement of joining OELS that you protect historic features (including archaeological sites and traditional farm buildings – see section 5.7)
**OD2 Take archaeological features currently on cultivated land out of cultivation**

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

For this option you must:

- Take archaeological sites out of cultivation.

- Choose a boundary, which encompasses the site 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, 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.
  - Manage the area as permanent grassland by grazing or mowing.
  - 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 site.
  - Prevent scrub development.
  - Minimise the use of heavy vehicles on the site, particularly in wet weather, to prevent damage caused by wheel rutting and compaction.
  - Do not tip or dump any material on the site.
  - Avoid obvious earthworks if harrowing and rolling.

**OD2, 600 points per ha**

**ED2, 460 points per ha**
OD3 Reduce cultivation depth on land where there are archaeological features

ED3 Reduce cultivation depth on land where there are archaeological features

Where removal of sites from cultivation cannot be achieved within the management of your farm, reducing cultivation depth is a ‘next-best’ option. Shallow cultivation reduces the risk of damage to archaeological sites on farmland. This option may be applied to the whole, or part, of the field where the archaeological feature is, depending on what is practical on your farm.

For this option you must:

● You must avoid deep soil disturbance by using shallow cultivations (i.e. a maximum depth of 10 cm, 4 inches) or no-till practices.

● Do not sub-soil or mole-plough.

● Do not use machinery under conditions likely to cause rutting or compaction.

● Do not grow root crops, maize or energy crops.

● If sowing a spring crop, maintain the previous over-wintered stubble until 14 February.

● The area should not be used as farm access.

OD3, 100 points per ha

ED3, 60 points per ha

OD4 Management of scrub on archaeological sites

ED4 Management of scrub on archaeological sites

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

For this option you must:

● Where scrub is present on a site, further encroachment must be prevented by grazing and/or mowing.

● To avoid disturbance to nesting birds, do not remove scrub between 1 March and 31 July.

● You must prevent the spread of weeds, shrubs, saplings or scrub to avoid damage by roots.
● Avoid using heavy machinery and ensure works do not disturb the ground.

● If carrying out scrub clearance, stumps and roots must not be grubbed out, but stumps may be cut (or ground down) level with the land surface and vegetation should be prevented.

● Remove cuttings or brash from the site.

● Do not tip, dump or burn any material on the site.

● 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**

**OD5 Archaeological features on grassland**

**ED5 Archaeological features on grassland**

Well managed permanent grassland is the best agricultural management option for archaeological sites 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 containing the archaeological feature.

For this option you must:

● 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 site.

● Control weed growth and prevent scrub development.
● Minimise the use of heavy vehicles on the site, particularly in wet weather, to prevent damage caused by wheel rutting and compaction.

● Do not tip or dump any material on the site.

● 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 site.

● Do not plough or re-seed

**OD5, 16 points per ha**

**ED5, 16 points per ha**

Maintaining land as permanent pasture preserves archaeology
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, stabilising banks, protecting water courses and reducing diffuse pollution.

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 (e.g. ponds, ditches, riverbanks, hedges, stone walls). Buffer strips offer particular benefit to wildlife if placed adjacent to watercourses, hedgerows, stone walls and remnant boundary treelines. Generally speaking, the wider the buffer strip, the greater the protection and wildlife habitat that will be provided.
Buffer strip options in OELS and ELS must not overlap with

a) The Single Payment Scheme 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).

b) 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.

c) Public Rights of Way (e.g. footpaths or bridleways) along field edges.

You must start your OELS and ELS buffer strip options where your other uncultivated land ends (i.e. 2 m from the centre of a hedge or ditch, and at least 1 m from the top of a ditch bank).

Buffer strip options OE1, OE2 and OE3 and EE1, EE2 and EE3 must not run alongside any 6-10 m set-aside strips established under your Single Payment Scheme entitlement. This rule does not apply to set-aside strips wider than 10 m, but the OELS and ELS buffer strips must be located between the set-aside strip and the environmental feature being buffered.

You may establish 2 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 which extends further than 2 m from the centreline, it is acceptable for part of your OELS or ELS buffer strip to be covered by 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, and they are not under permanent set-aside. However, a buffer strip must be located on land which could, in practice, be cultivated (e.g. very steeply banked strips alongside boundaries are not eligible).

Remember: You should not apply manures within 10 m of a watercourse (as advised in the Water Code, Defra Publications, PB 0587) and, when spraying pesticides adjacent to buffer strips on ELS eligible land, you must still keep to the pesticide regulations in order to control drift.
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 hectares for each field. This will give you a figure which you will need to complete your Single Payment Scheme (SPS) return (see section 4.1.3). It will also help you to work out the remaining field area available for other uses e.g. cropping, other OELS (or ELS) options or set-aside.

For each buffer strip, measure the length of the option in metres, and convert this to hectares (to the nearest 0.01 ha (100 m²). See section 2.3.4, for a worked example of the conversion to hectares.

You may find it helpful to use the worksheet provided at appendix 3 to help you to calculate the area of buffer strip options in each field.

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 this option you must:

- Establish or maintain a grassy strip during the first 12 months of your agreement – ideally by natural regeneration, or by sowing. Remove any compaction in the topsoil if you need to prepare a seed bed. Regular cutting in the first 12 months may be needed to control annual weeds and encourage grasses to tiller.

- These strips should not receive any fertilisers or manure.

- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

- Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

- After the 12 months of your agreement, cut buffer strips only to control woody growth, and no more than one year in five (where next to woodland, one year in ten).

- Do not use buffer strips for regular access, turning or storage.
OE1, 400 points per ha for 2m buffer strips on rotational land
OE2, 500 points per ha for 4m buffer strips on rotational land
EE1, 300 points per ha for 2m buffer strips on cultivated land
EE2, 400 points per ha for 4m buffer strips on cultivated land
OE3 6 m buffer strips on rotational land

EE3 6 m buffer strips on cultivated land

Follow the management for OE1/OE2, or EE1/EE2 and in addition:

- After the first 12 months of your agreement, cut the three metres next to the crop edge annually after mid July. Only cut the other three metres to control woody growth, and no more than one year in five (where next to woodland, one year in ten).

- *If you wish, you may establish all or part of the margin by sowing a mix of fine-leaved grasses and flowers (e.g. knapweed, bird’s-foot-trefoil, selfheal, oxeye daisy, yarrow). If you decide to do this, it is recommended that you cut each year in August or September and, 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**

OE3: 6 m buffer strip on cultivated land

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OE4, 5 & 6 2 m, 4 m and 6 m buffer strips on organic grassland

EE4, 5 & 6 2 m, 4 m and 6 m buffer strips on intensive grassland

For this option you must:

- On fields which will be mown, leave an uncut 2 m/4 m/6 m buffer strip around mown grass fields; graze along with the aftermath, following the final cut.

- Do not poach or overgraze the buffer strip.

- The strips should not receive any fertilisers or manure.

- OE4, 5 & 6 are available on grassland stocked at more than 1.0 glu/ha (refer to table in prescription OK5/EK5). It is not a requirement to fence these buffer strips.

Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

- After the first 12 months of your agreement, cut buffer strips only to control woody growth and no more than one year in five (where next to woodland, one year in ten).

- Do not use buffer strips for regular access, turning or storage.

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 & OE8 Buffering in-field ponds in organic grassland and rotational land

EE7 & 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 protect them from nutrient leaching and run-off and provide additional habitat for pond wildlife. They 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.
For this option you must:

- **This option is only available where the stocking rate on grassland or grass in rotation is more than 1.0 glu/ha.**
- **Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.**

- Patch size should be no more than 0.5 ha, although several patches may be linked where there are several ponds in a field.

- Buffer areas should extend at least 10 m from the edge of, and around, each pond.

- You may allow some scrub to develop, but this must be around less than half of the pond margin.

- After establishment, cut no more than one year in five to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub. Do not allow scrub to develop on archaeological sites.

- Do not apply fertiliser or manure.

- Establish buffer areas 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.

- If the weed burden becomes unmanageable, you may surface seed these patches with a tussocky grass mix.

- Where the field is grazed, limit livestock access so that less than half of the pond edge is poached.

*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*
OPTIONS FOR ARABLE LAND

Options OF1 to OF8 are available on rotational land: that is land that has been in arable production, including set-aside, at least once in the past five years prior to the start of your agreement. Options EF1 to EF11 are only available for arable land, which is land that has been in arable production, including set-aside, throughout the past five years prior to the start of your agreement.

Management plans

In addition to these arable land management options, you may wish to consider the soil, nutrient, manure and crop protection management plan options at pages 117 to 121 of this handbook, all of which are relevant to arable farming systems.

OF1 Management of field corners

The provision of a natural grassy corner will greatly increase the wildlife interest of an arable field. These areas are often awkward to reach with machinery and are of lower productivity. 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 sites.

Although this option is designed for field corners, if you have small areas within the field which would be beneficial to take out of production, you may do so.
Patch size should be no more than 1 ha and there should be a maximum of one paid patch per 20 ha of arable land to ensure that patches are well distributed across the holding.

For this option you must:

- Establish or maintain 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.*

- After establishment cut no more that one year in five to allow the development of tussocky grass and low scrub.

- Do not apply fertilisers or manures.

- **Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.**

- If the weed burden becomes unmanageable, you may surface seed these patches with a tussocky grass mix.

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

*OF1, 500 points per ha*

*EF1, 400 points per ha*
OF2 Wild bird seed mixture

EF2 Wild bird seed mixture

This type of crop will feed seed-eating birds in arable landscapes, where there is little remaining food source. The aim is to provide a year round supply of food.

For this option you must:

- Strips or blocks may periodically be relocated within the same field to avoid the build up of weeds or soil borne disease.
- Sow a combination (either as a mixture or in alternate rows) of at least three small-seed bearing crops (e.g. cereal, kale, quinoa, linseed, millet, mustard, fodder radish, borage), with no single species making up more than 70% by weight of the mix.
- Re-establish as necessary to maintain seed production, and re-sow at least every other year.
- Sow in strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields and/or in blocks. Blocks or strips must not exceed 0.5 ha and you must have no more than one block or strip per 20 ha. This is to ensure that blocks and strips are well distributed across the land.
- Only apply fertiliser or manure if necessary for establishment.
Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). However contact non-residual, products may be used prior to sowing to facilitate re-establishment.

Seed treatment to control seedling pests and diseases is permitted where essential for successful establishment.

Do not apply any other pesticides.

The area should not be used for access, turning or storage.

Do not graze.

**OF2, 550 points per ha**

**EF2, 450 points per ha**

**EF3 Wild birdseed mixture on set-aside land**

This option is only available on ELS eligible land. You can only locate this option on set-aside land if you do not already have an obligation to sow a green cover (e.g. following maize). Refer to set-aside instructions to check this before you decide where to put this ELS option on your ELS eligible land.

For this option you must follow the management requirements above for option EF2, but in addition:

- For EF3 only (on set-aside land) you must make sure the seed mixture is sown as a mix rather than in alternate rows.

**EF3, 85 points per ha**
OF4 Pollen and nectar flower mixture

EF4 Pollen and nectar flower mixture

Incorporating flowering plants in plots will boost the number of pollen and nectar feeding insects including butterflies and bumblebees.

For this option you must:

- Sow a mixture sown of at least three pollen and nectar rich plants (e.g. red clover, alsike clover, bird’s foot trefoil), with no single species making up more than 70% of the mix by weight. The inclusion of non-aggressive grasses (e.g. meadow fescue, sheep’s fescue, smooth stalked meadow grass) can help reduce the impact of annual weeds.

- Sow in strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields and/or in blocks during July to August or mid-March to mid-April.

- Blocks should not exceed 0.5 ha and you should have no more than one block per 20 ha. This is to ensure that blocks are well distributed across the holding.

- Re-establish the mix as necessary to maintain a sustained pollen and nectar supply.

- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds, (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). However, contact, non-residual products may be applied prior to re-establishment.
Do not apply any other pesticides, fertiliser, manure or lime.

To stimulate late flowering, cut half the area to 20 cm in June and the whole area to 10 cm between 15 September and 31 October, ideally removing cuttings.

The area should not be used for access, turning or storage.

Winter / autumn grazing benefits legumes and is allowed, but do not graze in the spring or summer and avoid poaching damage.

**OF4, 550 points per ha**

**EF4, 450 points per ha**

**EF5 Pollen and nectar flower mixture on set-aside land**

This option is only available on ELS eligible land. You can only locate this option on set-aside land if you do not already have an obligation to sow a green cover (e.g. following maize). Refer to set-aside instructions to check this before you decide where to put this ELS option on your ELS eligible land.

Follow the management requirements above for option EF4, but in addition,

- Do not use any fertiliser or manures.

**EF5, 85 points per ha**

**OF6 Over-wintered stubbles**

**EF6 Over-wintered stubbles**

Over-wintered stubbles provide an important winter food source for seed-eating birds, from spilt grain and the seeds of broad-leaved weeds. They are also habitats for brown hares, and breeding sites for ground-nesting birds such as lapwing and curlew. This option concerns the management of land following the harvesting of a combinable crop such as oilseed rape, linseed, cereals or field beans (but not maize) until 14 February the following year.

For this option you must:

- Bale or chop and spread straw after harvest.
- A light surface cultivation to encourage weed germination and loosen any surface compaction or capping is allowed before the end of September or within the first month following harvest, if later. Otherwise, do not cultivate or apply manure.
You may subsoil tramlines following harvest to remove compaction, except where there are archaeological remains. This is recommended when there is a risk of soil run-off.

- Do not apply any pesticides, fertilisers, manure or lime to the stubble.
- Do not top or graze.
- Do not apply pre-harvest desiccants or post-harvest herbicides.
- The stubble must be followed by a spring-sown crop.
- 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.

**OF6, 150 points per ha**

**EF6, 120 points per ha**

**OF7 Beetle banks**

**EF7 Beetle banks**

Beetle banks are tussocky grass ridges, generally 2 m wide that run from one side of a field to the other, whilst still allowing the field to be farmed. They provide habitat for ground nesting birds, small mammals and insects (including those which feed on crop pests); and also contribute to crop pest control by encouraging a variety of insects. When beetle banks are carefully located in sloping fields they can help reduce run off and erosion but you must ensure they do not channel water and make existing problems worse.
For this option you must:

- Create an earth ridge at least 2 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 utilised where available.

- You may leave working gaps at each end of not more than 25 m.

- Sow with a mixture of perennial grasses, including some tussock forming varieties such as cocksfoot or timothy.

- **Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed)** may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

  Apply herbicide only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
You may need to cut the grass several times during the first summer to aid establishment. Thereafter, only cut as necessary to prevent the encroachment of woody and suckering species.

- Do not apply any pesticides, fertilisers or manure.

**OF7, 750 points per ha**

**EF7, 580 points per ha**

**OF8 Skylark plots**

**EF8 Skylark plots**

The UK skylark population has declined severely. This is due largely to the move from spring to winter cereals and the intensification of grassland management. Skylarks occupy open fields to avoid predators. They nest on the ground between April and August (two to three nesting attempts are made) in open vegetation of no more than about 50 cm high. The aim of this option is to provide suitable habitats in arable fields.
For this option you must:

- Each year, select a field that is to be sown with a winter cereal more than 5 ha in area and of an open aspect. 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.

- To create the plot, turn off the drill during sowing in order to leave an unsown area. This area should be no less than 3 m in length or width and no more than 12 m in length or width. The precise size and shape within these limits depends on what is practical with the drill.

- Do not create the plots so that they are connected to tramlines and make sure they are always away from field boundaries. After drilling, there is no requirement to manage plots differently to the remainder of the field (i.e. they can be over-sprayed, receive fertiliser applications, etc).

- Space plots across the field, creating no more than two plots per hectare.

- There must be no mechanical weeding of the plots between 1 April and harvest.

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

- This option is a ‘rotational’ option. This means that the plots may move around the farm within the normal arable rotation, but the same total number of plots must be maintained.

**OF8, 5 points per plot**

**EF8, 5 points per plot**

**EF9 Conservation headlands in cereal fields**

This option is only available on ELS eligible land.

Conservation headlands are headlands of cereal crops where the careful use of sprays allows populations of broadleaved weeds and their associated insects to develop. This provides feeding habitat for several farmland birds such as the grey partridge, tree sparrow and corn bunting. Rare arable plant communities will also benefit. Conservation headlands can be difficult to manage where grass weeds are a problem, particularly where herbicide resistance has been recorded. If an unexpected weed infestation occurs select a more appropriate location in following years.
For this option you must:

- Manage a 6 to 24 m wide headland along the edge of a cereal 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 use only amidosulfuron and only between 1 February and 31 March. For grass weeds use only the following active ingredients, tri-allate, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, diclofop-methyl + fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, tralkoxydim or clodinafop-propargyl.
- Where weed growth threatens harvest, you may use a pre-harvest desiccant.
- This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that the headlands may move around the farm with the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

*EF9. 100 points per ha*

Poppies provide habitat for insects, which in turn provide food for many farmland bird species
EF10 Conservation headlands in cereal fields with no fertilisers or manure

This option is only available on ELS eligible land.

Not applying fertilisers or manures on the headlands creates an open crop structure, which will provide greater potential for rare arable plants and more beneficial habitat for insects and birds. You may not have this option on the same land as option EF9.

For this option and in addition to EF9 management you must:

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

- This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that the headlands may move around the farm with the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

EF10, 330 points per ha
EF11 6 m uncropped, cultivated margins on arable land

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. The option will provide greatest benefits on sandy, shallow, chalky or stony soils.

For this option you must:

- Cultivate an arable field margin annually in spring or autumn to a depth of about 15 cm (6 inches). Varying the depth and season may prevent the build up of undesirable weeds.
- These strips should not receive any fertiliser or manure.
- Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort), or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- If the weed burden becomes unmanageable, you may develop these strips into 6 m grass buffer strips (see option EE3) and adopt the required management. Alternatively, you may relocate the option within the same field.

EF11, 400 points per ha
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 under storey to the cereal crop will reduce the need for agrochemical inputs, increase the diversity of habitat provided in the field and benefit farm wildlife.

For this option you must:

- Undersow a spring cereal crop (but not maize) with a grass ley, including at least 10% legume by weight.
- 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 (and the cereal crop is fully ripe).
- Do not destroy the grass ley before 15 July the following year.
- This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it can move around the farm with the normal rotation but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

**OG1, 150 points per ha**

**EG1, 200 points per ha**

**OG2 Wild bird seed mixture in arable 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 continuous supply of food.
This option may not be used on fields which have been in permanent grass for five years or more.

For this option you must:

- Sow a combination (either as a mixture or in alternate rows) of at least three small seed bearing crops (e.g. cereal, kale, quinoa, linseed, millet, mustard, fodder radish, borage), with no single species making up more than 70% of the mix.

- Sow in strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields and/or in blocks. Blocks or strips must not exceed 0.5 ha and you must have no more than one block or strip per 20 ha, so that blocks and strips are well distributed across the land.

- Strips or blocks may periodically be relocated within the same field to avoid the build up of weeds or soil borne disease.

- To maintain seed production, and re-sow at least every other year.

- **Injurious weeds** (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.

  **Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious grass weeds, (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed). However, contact no residual products may be used prior to spring resowing to facilitate re-establishment.**

  **Seed treatment to control seedling pests and diseases is permitted where essential for successful establishment.**

  **Do not apply any other pesticides.**

  **Only apply fertiliser or manure if necessary for establishment.**
● The area should not be used for access, turning or storage.

● Do not graze.

**OG2, 550 points per ha**

**EG2, 450 points per ha**

**OG3 Pollen and nectar seed mixtures in grassland areas**

**EG3 Pollen and nectar seed 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 in permanent grass for five years or more.**

For this option you must:

● Sow a mixture of at least three pollen and nectar rich plants (e.g. red clover, alsike clover, bird’s foot trefoil), with no single species making up more than 70% of the mix. The inclusion of non aggressive grasses (e.g. meadow fescue, sheep’s fescue, smooth stalked meadowgrass) can help reduce the impact of annual weeds.

● Sow in strips at least 6 m wide at the edges of fields and/or in blocks during July to August or mid-March to mid-April.

● Blocks or strips should not exceed 0.5 ha and you should have no more than one block per 20 ha, so that blocks and strips are well distributed across the holding.

● Re-establish the mix as necessary to maintain a sustained pollen and nectar supply.

● **Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter.**

● Contact, non-residual products, may be applied prior to re-establishment, otherwise apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

● Do not apply any pesticides, fertiliser, manure or lime.

● To stimulate late flowering, cut half the area to 20 cm in June and the whole area to 10 cm between 15 September and 31 October, ideally removing cuttings.
- The area should not be used for access, turning or storage.
- Winter/autumn grazing benefits legumes and is allowed but do not graze in the spring or summer and avoid poaching.

**OG3, 550 points per ha**

**EG3, 450 points per ha**

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

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

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

For this option you must:

- Sow a cereal (but not maize) in the autumn or spring.
- Harvest as whole crop silage.
- **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 use only amidosulfuron and only between 1 February and 31 March. For grass weeds use only the following active ingredients, tri-allate, fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, dicloflop-methyl + fenoxaprop-P-ethyl, tralkoxydim or clodinafop-propargyl. 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.

Retain stubble until at least 15 February in the following year and follow with a spring-sown crop.

No more than 5 ha of this option may be included in your application.

This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it may move around the farm with the normal arable rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

**OG4, 250 points per ha**

**EG4, 230 points per ha**

**OG5 Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles**

**EG5 Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles**

The management of fodder brassicas grazed in situ, such as rape, kale and stubble turnips, where weeds can persist in the crop and set seed, provide an important habitat for small-seed eating birds. **You must not locate these crops in any fields identified on your Farm Environment Record as high soil erosion risk.**

For this option you must:

- Graze carefully to minimise poaching and soil erosion.
- **Contact, non-residual, products may be used to control weeds prior to cultivations. In addition the use of the soil residual herbicide, propachlor is permitted when growing kale or swedes.**
- Retain the area uncultivated as stubble until at least 15 February in the following year and follow with a spring sown crop.
- Do not apply any pesticides, fertilisers, manure or lime to the stubble.
- This option is a ‘rotational option’. This means that it may move around the farm with the normal rotation, but the same total hectarage must be maintained.

**OG5, 110 points per ha**

**EG5, 90 points per ha**
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 leads to the removal of topsoil with the possible loss of productivity of the soil. It 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 £8 million a year.

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 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 cause problems if circumstances change. It is important that these fields should be included in your assessment of erosion (see section 2.3.3).

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 all effect how much or little run-off and erosion may occur. A soil management plan (see option OMI/EMI) should set out how you will manage the land to reduce the risk of erosion happening in future. Please see appendix 1 for information on how to obtain further advice on controlling soil erosion and the best farming practice.

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

- Avoid 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 occurs or is likely to occur (see options OJ1 and OJ2 and EJ1 and EJ2).
Preparing a soil management plan (see option OM1/EM1).

Locating buffer strips in appropriate places (see options OE1 – OE3/EE1 – EE3).

Introducing beetle banks along field contours (see option OF7/EF7)

Cultivating along field contours

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 lead 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.
OJ1 Management of high erosion risk cultivated land

This option is only available on fields at risk of soil erosion or run-off, as identified on your Farm Environment Record, on farms where root crops such as potatoes and sugar beet and/or where maize or brassica fodder crops are included in the current rotation.

For this option you must:

- Do not keep outdoor pigs or grow root crops such as potatoes, sugar beet, or maize and brassica fodder crops, in fields at risk of soil erosion or run-off.

OJ1, 18 points per ha

EJ1 Management of high erosion risk cultivated land

OJ2 Management of maize crops to reduce soil erosion

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

- Harvest by 1 October and plough or cultivate to leave a rough surface, ideally within 2 weeks of harvest, to reduce subsequent soil erosion.

  or

  Harvest by 1 October and establish an autumn sown crop.

  or

  Undersow the maize crop with a grass or clover-based mixture.

- 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.

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

OJ2, 18 points per ha

EJ2, 18 points per ha
Grassland should be managed in a way that promotes good soil structure and infiltration of rainwater to avoid run-off. Good general management includes reducing stocking densities, or reducing or avoiding grazing when the soil is wet. You may also consider reducing existing compaction, for example by sub-soiling or spiking.

**Management plans**

In addition to the grassland land management options you may wish to consider the soil, nutrient and manure management plan options at pages 117 to 121 of this handbook as they are also relevant on livestock farms.

**OK1 Take field corners out of management**

**EK1 Take field corners out of management**

The provision of unmanaged areas will increase the biodiversity of the farm. This option must not be located on archaeological sites.

For this option you must:

- Take unproductive or awkward corners of improved grass fields out of management.
- Patch size should be no more than 0.5 ha and there should be no more than three patches per 10 ha, so that the option is well distributed across the land.

- **Improved grass is that stocked at more than 1.0 glu/ha.**
- **Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by cultivation before establishment, cutting in the first year and selective trimming or manual removal thereafter**

- **Improved grass is that receiving over 50 kg/N per ha.**
- **Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds, (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).**
In order to allow the development of low scrub and tussocky grass, you must not cut more frequently than once in every five years.

- Do not apply fertiliser or manure.
- Do not graze.

**OK1, 500 points per ha**

**EK1, 400 points per ha**

### OK2 Permanent grassland with low inputs

**EK2 Permanent grassland with low inputs**

Permanent grassland managed with low inputs of fertiliser and sprays will sustain higher numbers of plants, butterflies and other insects than those subject to greater intensification. Permanent grassland is an important feature of pastoral landscapes and can help to protect buried archaeological features. In addition the more extensively managed the grassland the less likelihood of nutrient run-off into watercourses. This option can be used on a whole or part-field basis.

For this option you must:

- Maintain as grass, do not plough or re-seed.
- 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 and do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.
- Manage by grazing and/or cutting but do not cut between 1 April and 31 May.
You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications.

Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

Do not apply more than 50 kg/ha nitrogen per year as in organic 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 N per year. You may find it helpful to refer to the table in appendix 2, showing average total N supplied by various manures. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser application rates are less than this, you must not increase application.

Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

**OK2, 115 points per ha**

**EK2, 85 points per ha**

**OK3 Permanent grassland with very low inputs**

**EK3 Permanent grassland with very low inputs**

Grassland managed with no fertiliser has a high value for wildlife. Over 90% of traditionally managed low-input grassland has been lost to agricultural intensification so it is important to maintain and increase this resource. 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 go into option OK4/EK4 (management of rush pastures outside the LFA) rather than this option.*

For this option you must:

- Maintain as grass, do not plough or re-seed.
- You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications.

- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

- Do not cultivate.

- Do not supplementary feed.

- Manage by grazing and/or cutting, to remove the year's grass growth, but do not cut or top between 1 April and 30 June.

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

**OK3, 180 points per ha**

**EK3, 150 points per ha**

You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM in a single application, but only where the grassland is regularly cut. FYM must not be applied between 1 April and 30 June to avoid damage to ground nesting bird sites. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied. You may find it helpful to refer to the table in appendix 2 showing average total N supplied by various manures.

Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

Permanent pastures very low inputs of fertiliser and herbicide make better wildlife habitats.
OK4 Management of rush pastures (outside LFA)

EK4 Management of rush pastures (outside LFA)

This option is only available on fields where at least one third of the field area is covered by rushes. Damp pasture on farmland is a very important 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.

For this option you must:

- Cut rush dominated fields each calendar year, but not between 15 March and 1 August. Cut no more than one 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.

- You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications.

- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

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 N per year (see appendix 2 for N conversion table). Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure or fertiliser regime is less than this you must not increase applications.

Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
Where possible, graze the aftermath with cattle.

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

**OK4, 180 points per ha over the whole field**

**EK4, 150 points per ha over the whole field**

**OK5 Mixed stocking**

**EK5 Mixed stocking**

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 species. This option is not available to producers who are in receipt of the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA).

This option is only available on land, which is grazed by both cattle and sheep, either in the same year, or in alternate years as part of a clean grazing system.

- A minimum of 15% of the livestock units must be grazing cattle.
- A minimum of 15% of the livestock units must be grazing sheep.

Livestock units are calculated over a two year period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal numbers are converted into Livestock Units (LUs) as follows:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle over two years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle six months to two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland ewe and lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill ewe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram and teg over six months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OK5, 8 points per ha**

**EK5, 8 points per ha**
OPTIONS FOR THE UPLANDS (LFA LAND)

The options in this section (OL1 – OL5/EL1 – EL5) are only available on LFA land in parcels of less than 15 ha. EL6 is only available on LFA land in parcels of 15 ha or more.

All other options may also be used on LFA land (and where the option eligibility and management rules can be met) except those for lowland grassland outside the LFA (OK1 to OK5 and EK1 to EK5).

LFAs are Less Favoured Areas, where the natural characteristics (geology, altitude, climate, etc) make it difficult to farm. LFAs are shown on your Environmental Information Map provided by RDS.

Grassland, in particular in-bye land, ought to 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 may also consider reducing existing compaction, for example by sub soiling or spiking.

OL1 Field corner management (LFA land)
EL1 Field corner management (LFA land)

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

For this option you must:

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

- Do not apply fertiliser or manure.

- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

- You may cut only to control woody growth (no more than one year in five), so allowing scrub to develop.

**OL1, 100 points per ha**

**EL1, 100 points per ha**
OL2 Manage in-bye grassland with low inputs (LFA land)

EL2 Manage in-bye grassland with low inputs (LFA land)

Meadows and pastures managed with low inputs of fertiliser and sprays will sustain higher numbers of plants, butterflies and other insects than those subject to greater intensification. This grassland usually has received regular but low levels of organic and/or inorganic fertiliser and may be drained. Most will contain some ryegrass and white clover. This offers the best protection for archaeological features and is an important part of the landscape character. In addition the more extensively managed the grassland the less likelihood of nutrient run-off into watercourses. This option can be used on a whole or part-field basis.

For this option you must:

- Maintain as grass, do not plough or re-seed.
- You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications.
- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.
- 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 N per year (see appendix 2 for N conversion table). Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure or fertiliser regime is less than this you must not increase applications.
- Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock, or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).
- Do not cultivate.
- Supplementary feeding is allowed, but move feeders as often as required to avoid excessive poaching and do not feed on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, footpaths or watercourses.
- Manage by light grazing and/or cutting but do not cut or top between 1 April and 31 May.
- Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 31 May.

OL2, 35 points per ha

EL2, 35 points per ha
OL3 Manage in-byre pasture and meadows with very low inputs (LFA land)

Grassland managed with no fertiliser has a higher value for wildlife. Agricultural intensification has destroyed much species-rich grassland and it is important to maintain and where possible increase this resource. If your field has more than a third of its area covered by rushes, it must go into option OL4/EL4 (management of rush pastures) (LFA land) rather than this option.

For this option you must:

- Maintain as grass; do not plough or re-seed.
- You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications. This must not be applied between 1 April and 30 June to avoid damage to ground nesting bird sites. No other type of fertiliser or manure may be applied.
- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.
- Do not cultivate.
- Manage by grazing and/or cutting, to remove each year’s grass growth.
- Do not supplementary feed.
- Do not cut or top between 1 April and 30 June.
- Do not harrow or roll between 1 April and 30 June.

**OL3, 60 points per ha**

**EL3, 60 points per ha**
OL4 Management of rush pastures (LFA land)

EL4 Management of rush pastures (LFA land)

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 habitat for lapwing, curlew, redshank, snipe and reed bunting. Different types of waders prefer different vegetation heights, so a variety in the sward structure is most beneficial.

For this option you, must:

- 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 (i.e. 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.*

- Where possible, graze the aftermath with cattle.
Once cut, if aftermath grazing does not control rushes, a second cut should be carried out within eight weeks, but not between 1 April and 1 August.

You may apply up to 12.5 tonnes/ha (5 t/acre) of FYM. Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure and fertiliser regime is less than this, you must not increase applications.

Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled 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 N per year (see appendix 2 for N conversion table). Do not apply between 1 April and 31 May. If your current manure or fertiliser regime is less than this you must not increase applications.

Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed).

**OL4, 60 points per ha**

**EL4, 60 points per ha**

**OL5 Enclosed rough grazing (LFA land)**

**EL5 Enclosed rough grazing (LFA land)**

This option is only available on LFA land in blocks of less than 15 ha

Commonly known as allotments, intakes or newtakes, these are areas of enclosed 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:

- Do not apply fertiliser, manure, lime or slag.
- Do not cultivate.
- Do not supplementary feed.
- Do not increase your existing stocking level.
- Injurious weeds (e.g. creeping, spear or field thistle, curled or broad-leaved dock, and common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) may be controlled by selective trimming or manual removal.

- 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.
- Do not remove rocks, scree or mineral spoil.

**OL5, 35 points per ha**

**EL5, 35 points per ha**
EL6 Moorland and rough grazing

This option is only available within LFA land parcels of 15 ha or more.

For this option you must:

- Manage the land without applying fertiliser, manure lime or slag.
- Do not cultivate.
- 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 or mineral spoil in place.
- Do not supplementary feed using silage as other forage wrapped in plastic. Ring feeders or troughs should not be used. All feeding sites should be moved regularly to minimise damage to vegetation and soils and care must be taken to avoid damage by vehicles.
- Take action to contain bracken, rhododendron, gorse or similar infestation so that they do not spread to new areas of land. Wherever possible, control of bracken should be by mechanical means, otherwise, to chemically control bracken, only asulam may be used, and care must be taken 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, an SSSI 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. At least one follow-up treatment will be required in subsequent years to control re-growth.
- Where you have the legal right to carry out burning, and intend to do so, you must follow the Defra Heather and Grass Burning Code. You may obtain a copy of the Code from your RDS office.
- Apply herbicides only to spot treat or weed wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping or spear thistle, curled or broadleaved dock or common ragwort).

*EL6, 5 points per ha*
If you choose a management plan option, the management plan must be prepared in the first year of your agreement. OM1 and OM2 and EM1 and EM2 must be updated each year of your agreement. OM3 and OM4 and EM3 and EM4 must be updated following the instructions given for the option concerned. Please note, if you are planning to apply for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and wish to consider resource protection options, you will be required to complete a Soil management plan. In addition, some HLS resource protection options may require a Nutrient management plan (OM2/EM2) or a Manure management plan (OM3/EM3).

Management plan options may be applied to all field parcels included in your application, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for the management plan concerned.

**OM1 Soil management plan**

**EM1 Soil management plan**

A soil management plan should set out how you will manage the land to reduce the risk of erosion and maintain good soil structure. Please see appendix 1 for information on how to obtain further advice on controlling soil erosion and the best farming practice. You may also wish to consider the OELS (or ELS) land management options to protect soils (see handbook page 103 for introductory guidance and management requirements for these options).

A soil management plan must be documented and include the following steps:

- Obtain and read the relevant Defra publications on controlling run-off and erosion (see appendix 1 for details). In addition you may wish to refer to the Environment Agency publications also listed, and to the Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) Audit at www.leaf.org.

- Using the Defra field guide (available from Defra publications, see appendix 1) or the advice of a consultant, prepare an assessment of the risks of run-off and erosion for your whole farm. Produce a map showing the risk class for each field or part field.

- Record on a field-by-field basis the steps you will take during the coming year to minimise the risk of run-off and soil erosion, including how you will manage the soil to ensure good structure and maintain the infiltration of rainfall.
Repeat the field-by-field assessment each year incorporating the experiences of previous years.

**OM1, 3 points per ha.** This must be based on the area of land excluding unimproved land (as identified on your Farm Environment Record).

**EM1, 3 points per ha.** This must be based on the area of land excluding unimproved land (as identified on your Farm Environment Record).

### OM2 Nutrient management plan

**EM2 Nutrient management plan**

A nutrient management plan should take into account all sources of nutrient supply as well as soil nutrient status and the influence of soil type, rainfall and irrigation. The plan should follow a recognised fertiliser recommendation system (see appendix 1 for suggested guidance) and should be prepared in conjunction with a FACTS (Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training Scheme) qualified person. A nutrient management plan must be documented and include the following steps:

- Maintain an up-to-date soil analysis. Soils must be analysed for pH, P, K, and Mg every three to five years, depending on the cropping system. Use the results to adjust inputs of lime and phosphate, potash and magnesium nutrients.

- Assess the nutrient requirement of the crop using a recognised fertiliser recommendation system.

- Assess the nutrient supply from organic manures (see appendix 2 for suggested guidance).

- Calculate the need for fertiliser nutrients by deducting the contribution from organic manures from the crop nutrient requirement.

- Spread organic manures and fertilisers as accurately and uniformly as possible. Equipment should be in good working order and recently calibrated.

- Keep clear field records of cropping, organic manure and fertiliser applications. This will aid future decisions on nutrient management and demonstrate the practical outcome of the plan.

- Update the plan at the start of each cropping year.

*A nutrient management plan completed for other schemes (such as a farm assurance scheme or LEAF) will count as a nutrient management plan under this option, providing it includes all the steps described above.*
OM2, 2 points per ha. This must be based on the area of land which received inputs of manure and/or fertilisers.

EM2, 2 points per ha. This must be based on the area of land which received inputs of manure and/or fertilisers.

**OM3 Manure management plan**

**EM3 Manure management plan**

This option is only available on farms where manures are spread. A manure management plan should include the preparation of a field risk map (risk of causing water pollution) and an assessment of the need for any extra slurry or dirty water storage. You can either draw up your own plan or obtain professional advice from a consultant (see appendix 1 for suggested guidance).

A manure management plan must be documented and include the following steps:

- Identify areas where animal manures should never be spread. These non-spreading areas must be marked on a farm map (in red).

- Identify areas where animal manures should not be spread under certain conditions or where application rates should be restricted. These very high-risk areas (orange) and high-risk areas (yellow) must be marked on a farm map. The remaining areas must be marked as lower risk (green). Identify on the map any areas in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones affected by the closed non-spreading periods.

- Calculate the minimum area of land needed for spreading animal manures. The maximum field application of total nitrogen from spread manures must be limited to 250 kg per ha per year.

- Identify the area of land that may be used for spreading sewage sludge or other organic wastes. This step is not required if these materials are not brought onto the farm.

- Assess whether extra storage is needed for slurry or dirty water. Use the risk map (coloured map) and your experience of spreading over the winter period to identify whether extra storage is needed to minimise the risk of causing water pollution.

- Update the risk map if you take on extra land.

- Update the storage assessment if slurry or dirty water production increases.

- Use the plan to help you with field spreading and minimise the risk of causing pollution.
A manure management plan completed for other schemes (such as a farm assurance scheme or LEAF) will count as a manure management plan under this option, providing it includes all the requirements described above.

**OM3, 2 points per ha. This must be based on the area of land excluding unimproved land (as identified on your Farm Environment Record)**

**EM3, 2 points per ha. This must be based on the area of land excluding unimproved land (as identified on your Farm Environment Record)**

**EM4 Crop protection management plan**

This option is only available on ELS eligible land.

The crop protection management plan must be documented and must include the following steps:

- Produce your plan in conjunction with a qualified BASIS agronomist.
- Ensure your plan is site-specific and is updated annually.
- Make full use of all biological, cultural and chemical methods that can be economically and practically implemented on your farm.
- Consider farm location, soil type, previous cropping, rotations and any pesticide resistance issues. This can help you anticipate and predict potential problems.
- Adopt non-chemical control options whenever economic or practical. Include the use of rotations, cultivations and resistant varieties and encourage natural predators by incorporating beetle banks and field margins.
- Inspect crops regularly and identify weeds, pests and diseases. Cultural and/or chemical techniques should be used and the environmental impact of each choice assessed.
- Select a pesticide that effectively controls weeds, pests or diseases. The chosen pesticide should minimise impacts on crop pest predators and non-target organisms. Neighbouring crops, wildlife habitats and watercourses should be taken into account before finalising pesticide choice.
- Minimise environmental impact by spraying under optimum conditions. Avoid field margins and watercourses and minimise spray drift. Always leave hedge bottoms unsprayed. Where appropriate, undertake a Local Environment Risk Assessment for Pesticides (LERAPS).
● Keep accurate records. These must include the justification for a particular course of action.

● Regularly maintain all spray machinery in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

● Store pesticides in accordance with the Green Code (available from Defra Publications, PB 3528) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requirements.

● Dispose of any surplus pesticide waste and containers in a responsible manner so as not to contaminate the environment.

See appendix 1 for suggested guidance publications

* A crop protection management plan completed for other schemes (such as a farm assurance scheme or LEAF) will count as a crop protection management plan under this option, providing it includes all the requirements described above.

* EM4, 2 points per ha. This must be based on the field area growing all annual crops other than grassland.
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 the same area of land at the same time as another OELS land management option. However, there are exceptions for certain combinations of options but no more than two OELS land management options (including boundary management options) may occupy the same area of land at the same time. Management plans have separate rules, which are explained in the specific requirements for each management plan option see pages 117 to 121.

Each row of the table below shows combinations of options which may be located in the same place at the same time. Combinations of options not shown in this table are not permitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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 or OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (of one side of the hedge)</td>
<td>OB4 or OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB3</td>
<td>Enhanced hedgerow management</td>
<td>OB4 or OB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB4</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedge/bank management on both sides</td>
<td>OB1 or OB2 or OB3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB5</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedge/bank management on one side</td>
<td>OB1 or OB2 or OB3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD3</td>
<td>Reduce cultivation depth on land where there are archaeological features</td>
<td>OF2 or OF4 or OF6 or OF8 or OG1 or OG2 or OG3 or OG4 or OG5 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODS</td>
<td>Archaeological features on grassland</td>
<td>OE4 or OE5 or OE6 or OK2 or OK3 or OK5 or OL2 or OL3 or OL5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE1</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on rotational land</td>
<td>OJ1 or OJ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE2</td>
<td>4 m buffer strips on rotational land</td>
<td>OJ1 or OJ2</td>
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<tr>
<td>OE3</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on rotational land</td>
<td>OJ1 or OJ2</td>
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<tr>
<td>OE4</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5 or OK5</td>
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<td>OE5</td>
<td>4 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5 or OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE6</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on organic grassland</td>
<td>OD5 or 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>OF2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF4</td>
<td>Pollen &amp; nectar flower mixture</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF6</td>
<td>Over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF8</td>
<td>Skylark plots</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</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 no more than two ELS land management options (including boundary management options) may occupy the same area of land at the same time. Management plans have separate rules, which are explained in the specific requirements for each management plan option see pages 117 to 121.

Each row of the table below shows combinations of options which may be located in the same place at the same time. Combinations of options not shown in this table are not permitted.

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<th>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>OG1</td>
<td>Under sown spring cereals</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG2</td>
<td>Wild bird seed mixture in grassland areas</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG3</td>
<td>Pollen and nectar seed mixtures in grassland areas</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>OD3 or OJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG5</td>
<td>Brassica fodder crops followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>OD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJ1</td>
<td>Management of high erosion risk cultivated land</td>
<td>OD3 or OE1 or OE2 or OE3 or OF2 or OF4 or OF6 or OF8 or OG1 or OG2 or OG3 or OG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs</td>
<td>OD5 or OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs</td>
<td>OD5 or OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures (outside the LFA)</td>
<td>OK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK5</td>
<td>Mixed stocking</td>
<td>OD5 or OE1 or OE2 or OE3 or OE4 or OE5 or OE6 or OE7 or OE8 or OG1 or OK2 or OK3 or OK4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL2</td>
<td>Manage permanent in-bye grassland with low inputs</td>
<td>OD5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL3</td>
<td>Manage in-bye pasture and meadows with very low inputs</td>
<td>OD5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OL5</td>
<td>Enclosed rough grazing</td>
<td>OD5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Option title</td>
<td>Option codes that may be located on the same land as those listed in the first column</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB1</td>
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<td>EB2</td>
<td>Hedgerow management (on one side of hedge)</td>
<td>EB5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB3</td>
<td>Enhanced hedgerow management</td>
<td>EB4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB4</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedge/bank management on both sides</td>
<td>EB1 or EB3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB5</td>
<td>Stone-faced hedge/bank management on one side</td>
<td>EB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC2</td>
<td>Protection of in-field trees (grassland)</td>
<td>EK2 or EK4 or EL2 or EL4 or EK5 or EK3 or EL3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED2</td>
<td>Take archaeological features currently on cultivated land out of cultivation</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED3</td>
<td>Reduce cultivation depth on land where there are archaeological features</td>
<td>EF8 or EF9 or EF10 or EG1 or EG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED5</td>
<td>Archaeological features on grassland</td>
<td>EK2 or EK3 or EL2 or EL3 or EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE4</td>
<td>2 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE5</td>
<td>4 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE6</td>
<td>6 m buffer strips on intensive grassland</td>
<td>EK5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE7</td>
<td>Buffering in-field ponds in improved 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>Conservation headlands in cereal fields</td>
<td>ED3 or EJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EF10</td>
<td>Conservation headlands in cereal fields with no fertilisers or manure</td>
<td>ED3 or EJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG1</td>
<td>Under sown spring cereals</td>
<td>ED3 or EJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG4</td>
<td>Cereals for whole crop silage followed by over-wintered stubbles</td>
<td>ED3 or EJ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ1</td>
<td>Management of high erosion risk cultivated land</td>
<td>EF9 or EF10 or EG1 or EG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK2</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with low inputs</td>
<td>ED5 or EK5 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK3</td>
<td>Permanent grassland with very low inputs</td>
<td>ED5 or EK5 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures (outside the LFA)</td>
<td>EK5 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EK5</td>
<td>Mixed stocking</td>
<td>ED2 or ED5 or EE4 or EE5 or EE6, EE7 or EE8 or EK2 or EK3 or EK4 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL2</td>
<td>Manage permanent in-bye grassland with low inputs</td>
<td>ED5 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL3</td>
<td>Manage in-bye pasture and meadows with very low inputs</td>
<td>ED5 or EC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL4</td>
<td>Management of rush pastures (LFA land)</td>
<td>EC2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Single Payment Scheme (SPS)

Land receiving payments from the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) may be entered into OELS. Your OELS payment will be in addition to any payment you receive for SPS.

4.1.1 Cross compliance management and OELS and ELS options

OELS and ELS options have been designed to go beyond the SPS cross compliance requirements. However, you should follow the procedure below when you are measuring your OELS and ELS hedge, ditch and buffer strip options to make sure you comply with both OELS/ELS and cross compliance requirements.

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 to OB3 and OB6 to OB10 and EB1 to EB3 and EB6 to 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.

Buffer strip options (OE1 to OE6/ EE1 to EE6) must not overlap with the cross compliance ‘protection zones’ (i.e. the OELS or ELS buffer strip must start 2 m from the centre of the hedge or at least 2 m from the centre of the ditch).
If you are locating your OELS or ELS buffer strip next to a hedge which extends further than 2 m from the centre, 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.

For full details of management requirements for SPS cross compliance please refer to your Single Payment Scheme guidance on Cross Compliance Handbook for England.

### 4.1.2 OELS options and set-aside land

*OELS options may not be located on set-aside land* apart from the following exceptions:

Options OU1, OM1, OM2, OM3 and OM4: All management plan options.

Options OB1, OB2, OB3, OB6, OB7, OB8, OB9 and OB10: All options that incorporate uncultivated land as part of hedge and/or ditch management requirements.

### 4.1.3 ELS options and set-aside land

*ELS options may not be located on set-aside land* apart from the following exceptions:

Option EF3: Wild bird seed mixture on set-aside land.

Option EF5: Pollen and nectar flower mixture on set-aside land.

Options EM1, EM2, EM3 and EM4: All management plan options.

Options EB1, EB2, EB3, EB6, EB7, EB8, EB9 and EB10: All options that incorporate uncultivated buffer strips as part of hedge and/or ditch management.

### 4.1.4 Providing information on your SPS annual return

You will be required to provide information about the location and amount of your OELS and ELS options on your annual SPS return.

### 4.2 Organic Aid Scheme/Organic Farming Scheme (OAS/OFS)

Land covered by an existing Organic Aid Scheme/Organic Farming Scheme (OAS/OFS) agreement is not eligible for OELS. This land must be excluded from your OELS application. Depending on the type of agreement you have under these schemes though, the following options may be available to you:
4.2.1 OAS/OFS conversion aid agreements

- Remain in these schemes until your conversion agreement(s) expire, then apply to join OELS; or

- Remain in these schemes until all of the field parcels included in these agreement(s) have completed conversion and then apply to join the OELS, transferring all of the field parcels covered by your OAS/OFS conversion agreement(s) into OELS (see below). This means you can transfer from the OAS/OFS into OELS at any point after the status of the field parcels listed on your certificates of registration and accompanying schedules issued by your Organic Inspection Body changes from ‘in conversion’ to fully organic. This will normally be after a period of two years for the conversion of improved land and three years for the conversion of top fruit orchards.

4.2.2 OFS maintenance agreements

- Remain in this scheme until your maintenance agreement(s) expires, then apply to join OELS; or

- Apply to join OELS, transferring all of the field parcels covered by your existing OFS maintenance agreement(s) into OELS (see below).

If you decide to remain in the OAS/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 and your calculations to establish your OELS eligible land area. This means you must either:

- Ask RDS to delete from annex 2 of your pre-filled application form and application maps the field parcels covered by your OAS/OFS agreement(s) 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 which are covered by your OAS/OFS agreement(s).

You must not include these field parcels in your calculations to establish your OELS eligible land area.

4.2.3 Transfers from OAS/OFS into OELS

If, after reading the above guidance you wish to transfer land included in an existing OAS/OFS agreement out of those schemes and include it in a new OELS application, you must:

a) Inform your RDS office that you wish to terminate your existing OAS/OFS agreement(s) early and transfer the land covered by these agreements into OELS. This triggers the transfer process.
b) Ask RDS to add the field parcels covered by your existing OAS/OFS agreement(s) to annex 2 of your pre-filled application form and application maps before they are sent out to you so you can include them in your calculations to establish your OELS eligible land area.

c) If you already have your pre-filled application form and application maps, check that the field parcels covered by your existing OAS/OFS agreement(s) are included. If the field parcels are not shown, you must contact your RDS office to request a new application form and application maps including these field parcels so you can include them in your calculations to establish your OELS eligible land area.

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

d) All of the field parcels covered by your existing OAS or OFS agreement(s) must be included in your OELS application, otherwise you will be in breach of your OAS/OFS agreement(s) and you will have to repay the OAS or OFS grant previously received.

e) Once you are confident that all of the field parcels you wish to transfer from your existing OAS/OFS agreement(s) into OELS are included in your application form and application maps, you should follow the guidance at section 2 of this handbook for how to complete your application on your OELS eligible land.

f) If your application to enter OELS is successful, RDS will contact you confirming the termination of your OAS/OFS agreement(s). Your entitlement to any remaining OAS/OFS grant due to you under these agreement(s) will cease from the date your OELS agreement comes into effect.

g) If, for whatever reason, your OELS application is unsuccessful, you will be notified and your OAS/OFS agreement(s) will continue unchanged.

It is not possible to transfer land from an existing OAS or OFS agreement into an existing OELS agreement. Section 6.4 of this handbook provides guidance on what to do if you want to add land to an existing OELS agreement.
4.3 Can I enter field parcels that are currently undergoing conversion, but have never benefited from conversion aid under OAS/OFS into OELS and attract conversion aid?

Yes, providing the field parcels are
- not included in an agreement under another agri-environment scheme;
- they are in their first year of conversion; and
- they are listed as ‘in conversion’ to organic farming on your certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules issued by your Organic Inspection Body.

These fields should qualify for both conversion aid top up payments at the applicable payment rates and for a payment of £60 per ha/per year as part of your OELS eligible land. If the field parcels are in year two or more of conversion, they will only qualify for a payment of £60 per ha/per year as part of your OELS eligible land.

To add these field parcels to your OELS application you should contact your RDS office and ask them to add the relevant field parcels to your pre-filled application form and application maps so that you can include them in your calculations to establish your points target on your OELS eligible land and your conversion aid top up payments (where applicable). You must not add any field parcels to your pre-filled details at annex 2 of your form yourself.

4.4 Can field parcels that are already fully organic, but have never benefited from conversion aid under the OAS/OFS go into OELS?

Yes – providing they are not covered by another agri-environment scheme agreement, although they will only qualify for a payment rate of £60 per ha/per annum as part of an OELS agreement. See section 4.2 above for how to add this land to your application.

4.5 Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)

If you already have a Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) agreement covering some of the land comprising your organic unit, you may still be able to apply for OELS. You must follow these instructions regarding which OELS eligible fields should be included in your application:
a) If a CSS option covers the whole field, the field concerned should not be included in your application. This means that you can do one of the following:

- Ask RDS to delete the relevant field parcel number before sending you your pre-filled application form, or;
- if you already have your pre-filled application form, cross out the relevant field parcel number on your field data sheet and on your application maps (see section 2.3.1 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 RDS for a new set of forms and application maps.

b) If the CSS option only covers part of the field (e.g. grass margins), you must include the whole field parcel in your application, but, in order to avoid being paid twice for the same thing, you must not locate any OELS options on top of any of your CSS options. This rule does not apply to OELS management plan options; they may be applied to all land included in your application, provided the land meets the eligibility criteria for the management plan concerned – see pages 117 to 121 of this handbook.

c) Land in CSS rotational options should be included in your application but you should make sure that each year there is no overlap of CSS and OELS options on the ground.

d) For boundary features (e.g. hedges), you can locate OELS boundary options on boundaries which are being funded by CSS (this is because the two schemes are paying for different things).

If your CSS agreement covers ELS eligible land that you manage, you may still be able to apply for ELS payments on this land as part of your combined OELS agreement.

You should follow steps (a) to (d) above remembering to include these field parcels in your calculations to establish and meet a points target for your ELS eligible land.

4.6 Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)

If you have a whole farm/holding ESA agreement, you cannot apply for OELS on this land until your ESA agreement has come to the end of its term. If you have land which is subject to a part-farm ESA agreement, you must follow the instructions (a) to (d) for CSS agreements (above). However, OELS and ELS options (including boundary options) may not be located within the area covered by the ESA agreement, although OELS and ELS boundary options may be located along boundaries which divide the ESA area from the OELS and/or ELS areas.
4.7 **Energy Crops scheme (ECS)**

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. However, you can count this land towards the area used to calculate your ELS points target and associated payment. ELS options must not be located within land parcels covered by the ECS agreement. Boundaries surrounding ECS parcels may be entered into ELS boundary management options.

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

Woodland under long term FWPS, FWS or WGS agreements (all of which are now closed to new applications) listed on your certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules provided by your Organic Inspection Body and forming part of your organic unit can count towards your OELS eligible land area.

Woodland covered by an EWGS agreement and listed on your certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules can also count towards your eligible area for OELS, but you must make sure that there is no overlap between your OELS options and any management you are required to do as part of your EWGS grant.

Woodland not listed on your certificate of organic registration and accompanying schedules and under long term FWPS, FWS, or WGS and forming part of your conventional unit can count towards your ELS eligible land area. Woodland not registered with an Inspection Body and covered by an EWGS agreement can also count towards your ELS eligible land area, but you must ensure that there is no overlap between your ELS options and any management you are required to do.

4.9 **Hill Farm Allowance (HFA)**

Land in blocks of 15 ha or less on which you are claiming HFA and which forms part of your organic unit is eligible to count towards your OELS points target and you may put OELS management options on HFA land.
Land in blocks of 15 ha or less on which you are claiming HFA and which forms part of your conventional unit is eligible to count towards your ELS points target and you may put ELS management options on HFA land.

All land in blocks of 15 ha or more on which you are claiming HFA must count towards your ELS points target and you may put ELS management options on this HFA land.

4.10 Other land management schemes on my land

If you receive payments from other agri-environment schemes or have similar commitments on the land, for instance, as part of an English Nature management agreement (including the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme) or an English Heritage management agreement, such land is not eligible for OELS. You will have to exclude the land parcels concerned from your application and you will not be able to put OELS or ELS options on any of the field parcels covered by these other agreements. It is your responsibility to ensure that these field parcels are not included in your application.

Other designated land (e.g., Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Scheduled Monuments) which is not receiving payment is eligible for OELS, but you must keep to the required management of the land concerned, and there must be no conflict with your OELS or ELS management.

4.11 Inheritance/Capital Gains tax exemption

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

You should 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 that your application meets these scheme rules.

A leaflet Guidance note on Environmental Stewardship for heritage properties designated under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 provides more detailed information for owners of inheritance tax exempt properties and their advisors. You can obtain this leaflet from your RDS office or it is available to download from Defra and Countryside Agency websites at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es or www.countryside.gov.uk/.
4.12 Farm assurance schemes and the Pesticide Industry Voluntary Initiative

If you are already taking part in one or more farm assurance scheme or the Voluntary Initiative, this will not affect your eligibility to apply for the scheme. Hopefully you will find it easier to accumulate points towards your separate points targets as a result of the management you are already following. This is particularly the case for assurance schemes which aim for improved environmental standards, such as the Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) Marque.

4.13 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 minimize the risk of diffuse nitrate pollution. If your land is within an NVZ, it is your responsibility to ensure that you can meet the rules of both schemes. Where the rules overlap you must meet those that are the most demanding. For further information on the Action Programme measures and detailed maps of NVZ locations, you can log on to the following website: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/quality/nitrate/.

4.14 Other obligations

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

4.15 Non-farming activities on organic land

Before allowing any non-farming activities to be carried out on the land comprising your organic unit (e.g. caravan parks, etc), you must contact your Organic Inspection Body to ensure that the status of the land comprising your organic unit will not be compromised. You will also need to ensure that the proposed activities do not conflict with the delivery of the required management options you have agreed to undertake on your OELS eligible land.
5.1 Organic Standards/Council Regulation 2092/91 (as amended) and the Compendium of UK Organic Standards

Since 1992, when EC Council Regulation 2092/91 became effective, organic food production has been strictly regulated. Regulation 2092/91 sets out the inputs and practices, which may be used in organic farming and growing, and the inspection system, which must be put in place to ensure this. This Regulation also applies to processing, processing aids and ingredients in organic foods. All foods sold as organic must therefore originate from growers, processors and importers who are registered with an approved Organic Inspection Body and subject to regular inspection.

Regulation 2092/91 is implemented in the UK by the Defra Compendium of UK Organic Standards which can be accessed from the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic.

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 seeds mixtures which have a minimum organic content.

5.2 Good Farming Practice (GFP)

You must abide by the standards of Good Farming Practice as set out in appendix 4 throughout your farm. If you fail to abide by these standards you will be in breach of your agreement. Farm for the purposes of Good Farming Practice is simply all the land and associated field boundaries comprising your organic unit and your conventional unit, including any land that has not been submitted as part of your application.

If you are receiving payments under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS), you must also ensure that all your agricultural land (including any land in set-aside) is in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) and complies with Statutory Management Requirements (SMR) as defined by the SPS rules.
5.3 Changes to your agreement as a result of European Community (EC) legislation

Changes to EC legislation may affect the requirements of your agreement. We will tell you about any changes well in advance.

5.4 Public rights of way

As a condition of joining the scheme, you must maintain existing rights of way and abide by the relevant legislation. This means that you must meet the following requirements:

5.4.1 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 three metres (ten feet) of headroom to allow adequate access for riders.

5.4.2 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.

5.4.3 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, cliffs). Make sure that no misleading signs are placed near rights of way that might discourage access.
5.4.4 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 ten months. Any warning notices should only be displayed when a bull is present in a field.

5.5 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, e.g. profits à prendre, easements, etc. 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.

5.6 Metal detecting on your land

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 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), where actions resulting from metal detecting (e.g. digging or vegetation disturbance) are listed as ‘operations likely to damage the special interest’ of your SSSI, you are required to give written notice to English Nature of these operations and can only proceed once you have received written consent.

As you are required to protect and maintain archaeological sites and other environmental features (i.e. all your FER features) over the entire area under agreement, you must ensure that no damage is caused to these features wherever metal detecting takes place (authorised or otherwise).

5.7 Protection of historic features

Your Environmental Information Map supplied by RDS will show some of the historic features (including archaeological sites and traditional farm buildings) on your land. If you have any of these features, you must meet the following scheme conditions:

- Do not cause ground disturbance on known and currently uncultivated archaeological sites.
● 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 five years.

● Do not deliberately plough more deeply or undertake additional 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 stone from substantially complete ruined traditional farm buildings or field boundaries.

5.8 Allow inspection

Authorised Defra staff or their agents may visit you to inspect your land during the course of your five year agreement. You must give them access at any reasonable time. An appointment will usually be made shortly beforehand, 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 at the pre-arranged time will be treated as unacceptable and potentially a breach of agreement.

5.9 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. RDS may need to obtain a copy of these inspection reports for administrative purposes and in applying to enter the OELS you authorise the release of these reports to RDS.

5.10 Keep necessary records

If your application is successful, RDS will send you a letter to confirm your acceptance into the scheme. **Your FER and Options maps will be returned to you. You must retain these documents, as 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. In addition, you must also keep comprehensive records of your commitment to organic farming as evidenced by your annual certificates of organic registration and accompanying schedules provided by your Organic Inspection Body for all of the land comprising your organic unit. You must renew these certificates annually and retain proof of your registration to ensure that you are registered with an Organic Inspection Body for the full duration of your OELS agreement. Further details can be obtained from your Organic Inspection Body.
6.1 Phased conversions

With the agreement of your Organic Inspection Body, you may choose to convert different parcels of land in your organic unit at stages over a number of years. In order to obtain conversion aid top ups on additional parcels of land after your OELS agreement has started, you will need to seek Defra’s agreement 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 five-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 agreed previously with your Organic Inspection Body.

6.2 Can I make changes to my agreement?

Hopefully you will be able to carry out the options and management required under your agreement without any difficulty. However, the situation may arise where you may need to change the choice or location of your chosen 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 intended to be used for changes which are absolutely necessary.
You must inform RDS about your proposed amendment before you make any changes to your options. Your amendment will not be valid until you have received a letter from your RDS office giving consent to the amendment.

We would not expect to amend an agreement more than once during its five year term. If you think you need to amend your agreement you must contact your RDS office to request an amendment request form (ERDP/LTA1). Once an amendment has been made, further amendments are only permitted in very exceptional circumstances (referred to as ‘force majeure’. See section 7.4).

6.3 What if I let, sell or transfer my land?

Please notify your RDS office as early as possible in advance of any change in occupancy or ownership (including sale, transfer, inheritance or lease) of any part of your agreement land. Your RDS office will send you a form (ERDP/LTA1) to amend your agreement to reflect the changes made.

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 RDS 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.

You must tell the new occupier about your OELS agreement before you transfer any land. If you transfer all of your land, your whole OELS agreement must be transferred to the new occupier and continued until it expires. The new occupier should be encouraged to take on all of the ES commitments relating to the transferred land, including the requirement to register as an organic producer with an Organic Inspection Body, in order to ensure continuity of organic registration and environmental management. If they refuse to do this, you (and not the new occupier) will be in breach of your ES agreement – and you are likely to have to repay the grant you have received.

If you transfer part of your holding, the new occupier will be expected to apply for a new ES agreement covering this land, or you (and not the new occupier) will be in breach of your ES agreement and you are likely to have to repay the grant you have received. Where possible, you will be expected to continue with your existing options on your OELS and ELS eligible land covered by your amended OELS agreement. The resulting replacement agreement will run for the remaining time of the original agreement.
6.4 Can I add land to my agreement?

It is not possible to add any land to an existing OELS 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 agreement (see section 4.2.3), you must either:

**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 of registration and accompanying schedules, issued by your Organic Inspection Body (see section 1.1.4 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**

- Wait until your existing OELS agreement is renewed and add the new land then.

6.5 Derogations

A derogation is required where a minor and temporary change from the agreed management requirements is needed on a single occasion. These may involve a relaxation from a time-based requirements, or requests to change cutting or cultivating requirements due to practical problems.

If such a derogation is required, you should contact RDS to request a derogation notice form (ERDP/ELS/OELS/2). You must complete this form providing the following information, and return it to RDS:

- Why the derogation is needed.

- What exactly the proposed course of action is (including precise location details).
● Confirmation that the situation was unforeseen and that other solutions which are within the allowed management requirements have been considered.

● Where the derogation concerns land registered with an Organic Inspection Body, you will need to obtain your 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 6.6 below).

You must inform RDS 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 RDS.

As a guide, we would not expect to see more than three derogations during the course of a five-year agreement.

The derogation notice form will be kept by RDS and all details, including those of the Inspection Body and countersigning adviser, will be checked during any compliance inspection.

6.6 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 (e.g. FWAG, English Nature, RSPB).

Where the derogation does not involve the use of pesticides, a farm conservation adviser may countersign the notice form.
7.1 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.

7.2 Penalties for breaches of agreements

If you breach your agreement, 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% 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 two 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. A final decision will be made after taking all the circumstances of your case into account.

Please see appendix 5 for further information and a description of penalties that can apply to breaches of your agreement.

7.3 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 aid than you are entitled to under your agreement you will be liable to reimburse the amount overpaid and 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.
7.4 ‘Force majeure’ (exceptional circumstances)

Where a breach is due to circumstances beyond your control that could not have been avoided by reasonable action, the Secretary of State has a discretion to decide not to take enforcement action to recover or withhold payments. In order for force majeure to be taken into account, you must have notified your RDS office of the force majeure event in writing within ten 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’ are:

● death of the agreement holder;
● long-term incapacity of the agreement holder;
● expropriation of a large part of the land provided this could not be anticipated when the agreement was signed;
● severe natural disaster gravely affecting the land;
● accidental destruction of livestock buildings on the land;
● an epizootic (such as foot and mouth disease) affecting part or all the agreement holder’s livestock.

7.5 Variation of your agreement by the Secretary of State (acting through Defra)

Very rarely, it may be necessary for the Secretary of State (acting through Defra) 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.

7.6 What if I disagree with any Defra decision or proposed action regarding my application or subsequent agreement?

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the way your application or agreement has been dealt with, you should write to the Business and Delivery Centre Manager at your RDS office 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 RDS 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 are still dissatisfied with the decisions that have been taken by RDS staff following reasonable attempts to informally resolve the dispute, you can ask to have your case referred to a RDS officer who has not been involved with your agreement. This officer will consider any points that you have raised and report to the Secretary of State with their view on the step or steps proposed to be taken to resolve the dispute.

Where you remain dissatisfied with the decision of the Secretary of State you have the option to have the matter referred to one or more independent persons, nominated by the Secretary of State, for further consideration.

Further details of the internal complaint procedure which will be followed in the event of a dispute are available from your RDS office, or via the internet at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es.

7.7 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 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.
Soil management plan

Defra advice (available from Defra Publications – Tel: 08459 556000) is contained in the Soil Code and the Controlling Soil Erosion series, which comprises:

- A field guide for an erosion risk assessment for farmers (PB4092).
- An advisory booklet for the management of agricultural land (PB3280).
- A manual for the assessment and management of agricultural land at risk from water erosion in lowland England (PB4093).
- Advisory leaflets for preventing erosion:
  - By grazing livestock in lowland England (PB4091).
  - By outdoor pigs (PB5820C).
  - In the uplands (PB5820A).
  - By wind (PB5820B).

In addition you may wish to refer to the following:

- Example soil management plans and management plan templates will be available on the internet at www.defra.gov.uk from July 2005.
- Environment Agency – ‘Best Farming Practices’ handbook (Tel: 08708 506 506 or e-mail: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk). This handbook is also available to download from www.environment-agency.gov.uk
- National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) Guide to better soil structure (www.silsoe.cranfield.ac.uk/nrsi/).

Nutrient management plan

- The Defra ‘Fertiliser Recommendations for Agricultural and Horticultural Crops (RB209)’, Seventh edition 2000 (obtainable from The Stationery Office) is one example of a recognised fertiliser recommendation system for non-organic land, but other sources can be used for guidance.
The PLANET Nutrient Management software provides a computerised, interactive, version of the Defra Fertiliser Recommendations (RB209). To obtain a copy, either visit www.planet4farmers.co.uk or ring the PLANET Helpline on 0845 6023864.

Guidance on the assessment of the nutrient supply from organic manures is available from the above publication, or from the MANNER (Manure Nitrogen Evaluation Routine) Decision Support System. This guidance is available free of charge from ADAS Gleadthorpe Research Centre (Tel. 01623 844331). For organic farms, see the Defra handbook ‘Managing Manures on Organic Farms’.

Manure management plan


Independent professional advice is available from members of the National Farm Waste Register, Races Farm, Aston Tirrold, Didcot, Oxford OX11 9DJ (Tel: 01398 361326).

Crop protection management plan

Detailed guidance on the production of crop management protection plans is available under the Voluntary Initiative (VI). Please see www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk for more details.
The table below may help you establish the nitrogen content of manures applied under the rush pasture and low input grassland options (EK2, EK3, EK4, EL2, EL3, EL4).

Typical total nitrogen contents 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/t</td>
<td>16 t/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig farmyard manure</td>
<td>7.0 kg/t</td>
<td>14 t/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 upon 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. For fuller details on the nutrient content of manures see Fertiliser Recommendations for Agricultural and Horticultural Crops (MAFF, RB209, Seventh edition 2000, available from The Stationery Office).
You may find it helpful to use this worksheet to record how you have calculated out the area of each buffer strip option in each field. This can also be used for option OC4/EC4 – Management of woodland edges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RLX field no</th>
<th>Option Code</th>
<th>Option description</th>
<th>Width (metres)</th>
<th>Length (metres)</th>
<th>Area in square metres</th>
<th>Area in hectares (divide area by 10,000)</th>
<th>Area in hectares (divide area by 0.01 ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XY3456789</td>
<td>013</td>
<td>6m Buffer strips to organic grassland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As referred to at section 5.2, you must agree to abide by Standards of Good Farming Practice across the whole of your farm, which includes any of your land which is not part of your OELS agreement. This means that:

a) You must comply with the appropriate requirements of

i. the Forestry Act 1967,

ii. the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994,

iii. the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981,

iv. Part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and the Plant Protection Products Regulations 1995,

v. the Heather and Grass etc (Burning) Regulations 1986,

vi. the Crops Residues (Burning) Regulations 1993,

vii. the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Control of Pollution (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) Regulations 1991 (as amended 1997),

viii. the Clean Air Act 1993,

ix. the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994,

x. the Hedgerow Regulations 1997,

xi. the Groundwater Regulations 1998, and


A brief explanation of what is required by this legislation is set out on pages 150-154.

b) You must tell us if you are convicted of an offence under any of this legislation, or are the subject of a statutory enforcement notice. Where such conviction, or the activities to which the statutory enforcement notice relates, adversely affect compliance with your agreement, you may be breaking this agreement and we can take action as at section 7.2 above and appendix 5;

c) You must retain copies of the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Soil, Water and Air, and any amendments, for the duration of your agreement. The codes are published by Defra (PB 0617 Soil, PB 0587 Water and PB 0618 Air).
You must also comply with the following verifiable standards across the whole of your farm:

d) **overgrazing:** you must avoid overgrazing, which means grazing your land so as to adversely affect the growth, quality or species composition of vegetation (other than vegetation normally grazed to destruction) on that land to a significant degree. Cases of suspected overgrazing will be investigated and failure to follow subsequent professional advice would be a breach of your agreement.

e) **undergrazing:** 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 undergrazing will be investigated and failure to follow subsequent professional advice would be a breach of your agreement.

f) **supplementary feeding:** Where supplementary feeding is permitted by your agreement, the feed must be provided in such a way that the vegetation is not excessively trampled or poached by animals or rutted by vehicles used to transport feed.

g) **field boundaries:** you must not remove or destroy any hedges or stone walls on your farm except by special derogation and subject to any necessary consent under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Enforcement will be through visual assessment of any recent damage during field checks.

h) **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs):** if you have an SSSI on your farm, you are required to give written notice to English Nature if you want to undertake any ‘operations likely to damage the special interest’ of your SSSI (these are listed on your SSSI notification papers). These operations can only proceed once you have received written consent from English Nature.

i) **silage and slurry stores:** if you construct a new silage or slurry store you must notify the Environment Agency before starting to use it. Defra will check to see if this notification has taken place.

j) **sheep dip:** if you propose to dispose of sheep dip on your farm you must obtain prior authorisation from the Environment Agency. Checks will be made to see that either an authorisation has been obtained or that there is a reason why no authorisation is needed in that individual case. You must also contact your Organic Inspection Body to ensure that the status of the land comprising your organic unit will not be compromised.

k) **hedgerows:** you must not trim hedgerows on your farm between 1 March and 31 July. Enforcement will be through visual evidence of recent damage during any checks carried out in these months.
What do I have to do under the legislation at a) above

As part of Good Farming Practice, you must comply with the appropriate requirements of the different pieces of legislation. If Defra is notified about the serving of an enforcement notice or a successful prosecution under any piece of this legislation, we will assess the extent to which the breach has prejudiced compliance with your agreement. If necessary, we will then apply a penalty, proportionate to the nature of the breach.

1. **Forestry Act 1967**
   - You must not fell trees without a licence from the Forestry Commissioners. They can investigate unauthorised felling and, where convictions are obtained, they can require replanting of the land on which the felling took place.

   - You must not knowingly or recklessly, or without lawful excuse, cause damage to a designated protected monument. Works that are not permitted unless a written consent has been granted by English Heritage on such sites include ploughing of pasture, deep cultivations, sub-soiling, drainage works, planting or removal of trees, hedges and shrubs, turf cutting, erection of fences or barriers, certain building works, laying of paths or foundations.

3. **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
   - You must not disturb or kill certain protected animals, birds and plants which are listed in the Schedules to this Act. You are prohibited from killing certain [game] species within specified close seasons and certain methods of killing or taking of wild birds are prohibited.

   - You must not use an unlawful pesticide or any that does not have a current approval under domestic or EC licensing provisions. You are obliged to store all pesticides safely, follow label instructions and abide by the recommended best practice as set down in the statutory code of practice for the safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings, known as the ‘Green Code’. You should not apply pesticides without the requisite training and certification.
5. **Heather and Grass, etc (Burning) Regulations 1986/428**

Any burning must be carried out on a rotational basis, at a frequency not greater than seven years, and over an area not exceeding 5% of the total area of the subject fields in any one year. There are different periods of the year when burning is prohibited, depending on whether or not you farm in an upland area (restrictions in certain areas start after 31 March). Licences to burn at restricted times may be granted in exceptional circumstances. The Heather & Grass Burning Code must always be complied with. Adjacent owners and occupiers must be informed at least 24 hours before a burn, and there are special provisions for notification for burns on Common land.

6. **Crops Residues (Burning) Regulations 1993/1366**

With very limited exceptions, you cannot burn cereal straw or stubble, dry harvested field bean, pea or oil seed haulm. If you are entitled to rely on an exception (for instance broken bales or where you have been served with a Plant Health notice), there is a list contained within the regulations of the precautions that must be complied with when burning.


You must apply for all necessary abstraction or impounding licences or necessary discharge consents from the Environment Agency and comply with all requirements imposed. You must have fit and proper storage for your slurry and oil in accordance with the 1991 regulations. If you are served with a Notice by the Environment Agency where they are of the opinion that there is a significant risk of pollution to controlled waters (which includes all freshwaters and groundwater), you must follow the terms of such Notice.

8. **Clean Air Act 1993**

You must not burn rubber tyres, polythene, plastic bags or containers or other waste materials which cause emission of dark smoke on trade premises (which include all farms). Waste must be disposed of in appropriate ways that do not damage the environment (in particular see the Defra Codes of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Air and Soil referred to above).

9. **Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994/2716**

These regulations deal with the conservation of specially designated conservation sites and certain methods of taking or killing wild animals are prohibited. Certain species of plant are protected, and it is possible to apply for licences to cover specific derogations, but only where there are no satisfactory alternatives available. If you farm in a Special...
Area of Conservation or Protection, or if you have entered into a Management Agreement, you must adhere to any restrictions that apply.

10. **Hedgerow Regulations 1997/1160**

You cannot remove, without permission from your local planning authority, any hedges on agricultural land which are at least 20 metres in length, are over 30 years old and contain certain specified species of plant. Permission will not be given where the hedge is important. If you have any doubts or need to ask about any licence that is required before you take action to remove any part of a hedge, you should contact your local planning authority.

11. **Groundwater Regulations 1998/2746**

If you cause or knowingly permit disposition of substances that include mineral oils, organo-phosphorous compounds, cadmium, hydrocarbons and biocides from entering groundwater without an authorization you are committing an offence.


Since 2002 the vast majority of land (over 80%) in England has been designated as being a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. You are responsible for establishing whether your farm is within such a zone and, if so, you must be aware of and comply with the programme of nitrogen fertiliser and organic manure application restrictions contained in the first schedule to these regulations. You must take account of the particular land use, soil conditions, type and slope, climatic conditions, rainfall and irrigation. You must follow the detailed requirements of the regulations in order to assess any spreading restrictions that apply.
As referred to in section 7 of this handbook, if you breach your agreement you may be liable to a penalty, depending on the circumstances of the breach.

In all cases, any penalties applied will be proportionate to the severity of the breach.

Penalties will be applied to the following five types of breaches:

1. 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);

2. Where the management requirements for an option are not being followed (e.g. where a hedgerow has been entered into an hedgerow management option but has subsequently been cut during the period 1 March to 31 July when this is not permitted);

3. Where your FER features have been removed or damaged;

4. Where the requirements of Good Farming Practice are not being followed.

5. Where inaccurate areas have been claimed under the conversion aid top up payments.

Further details are set out below.

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% of the payment made or payable to you.

1. Points claimed cannot be found

Where inspection reveals a discrepancy between what you are claiming for a particular option in a particular location and the actual length/area/number on the ground, the points value for that option and location will be deducted from your OELS or ELS total points. This shortfall can be offset against any surplus points from other options on land receiving the same area payment (i.e. £60/ha or £30/ha or £8/ha, see section1.1.9). 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:
### Difference between target points claimed and points found

| Points found are less than your target points, but the difference is not more than 3% | Payment will be reduced (or recovered) based on points found. |
| The difference is more than 3%, but not more than 20% | Difference between target and found points multiplied by 2 and deducted from found points and payment reduced (or recovered) accordingly. |
| Difference is more than 20% | Total annual payment [for the corresponding payment area] withheld. |

### 2. Option management requirements not being followed

If you do not follow the management requirements for a particular option, you will lose all the points for this option where it is located and the points claimed will be deducted from either your OELS or ELS total points. This shortfall can be offset against any surplus points from additional options located elsewhere on other land receiving the same area payment. 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 outlined above.

### 3. Damage or removal of FER feature

If you damage or remove any of your FER features your annual payment will be reduced. Any penalty will be proportionate to the nature and severity 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.

### 4. Breaches of Good Farming Practice

Similar penalties as under 3 above will be applied to breaches of Good Farming Practice, related to the severity, permanence and frequency of the breach.
5. 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 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference between area claimed and area found penalty</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area found is more than area declared</td>
<td>No penalty, but payment will be based on area declared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area found is less than area declared (the difference between the area declared and the area found is less 3%)</td>
<td>No penalty, but payment will be based on area found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area found is less than area declared (the difference between the area declared and the area found is more 3% but not more than 20%)</td>
<td>The adjustment will be twice the difference found (i.e. the area subject to conversion aid area payments is declared as 20 ha, its 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 area declared (the difference is more than 20%)</td>
<td>Total annual conversion aid payment for the corresponding category will be withheld (i.e. 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>
RDS offices are open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays.

**Contact details for RDS offices.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDS region</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>East of England</strong></td>
<td>RDS East&lt;br&gt;PO Box 247&lt;br&gt;Cambridge&lt;br&gt;Tel: <strong>08456 024094</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fax 01223 533777&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdce.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdce.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Hertfordshire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Midlands</strong></td>
<td>RDS East Midlands&lt;br&gt;PO Box 8296&lt;br&gt;Nottingham&lt;br&gt;Tel: <strong>08456 024091</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fax 0115 9294886&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcem.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcem.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North East</strong></td>
<td>RDS North East&lt;br&gt;PO Box 578&lt;br&gt;Newcastle upon Tyne&lt;br&gt;Tel: <strong>08456 024097</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fax 0191 229 5508&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcne.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcne.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and the former county of Cleveland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North West</strong></td>
<td>RDS North West&lt;br&gt;PO Box 380&lt;br&gt;Crewe&lt;br&gt;Tel: <strong>08456 024093</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fax 01270 754280&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcnw.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcnw.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South East</strong></td>
<td>RDS South East&lt;br&gt;PO Box 2423&lt;br&gt;Reading&lt;br&gt;Tel: <strong>08456 024092</strong>&lt;br&gt;Fax 0118 939 2263&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcsd.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcsd.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent and Isle of Wight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### RDS Contact details and list of ERDP schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDS region</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South West</strong></td>
<td>RDS South West &lt;br&gt;PO Box 277 &lt;br&gt;Bristol &lt;br&gt;BS10 6WW &lt;br&gt;Tel: 08456 024098 &lt;br&gt;Fax 0117 9505392 &lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcsw.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcsw.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Midlands</strong></td>
<td>RDS West Midlands &lt;br&gt;PO Box 530 &lt;br&gt;Worcester &lt;br&gt;WR5 2WZ &lt;br&gt;Tel: 08456 024095 &lt;br&gt;Fax 01905 362888 &lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcwm.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcwm.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</strong></td>
<td>RDS Yorkshire &amp; The Humber &lt;br&gt;PO Box 213 &lt;br&gt;Leeds &lt;br&gt;LS16 5WN &lt;br&gt;Tel: 08456 024096 &lt;br&gt;Fax 0113 230 3790 &lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:bdcyh.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk">bdcyh.genesis@defra.gsi.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contact details for the RPA’s Customer Service Centre in Newcastle are:

Customer Service Centre <br>Rural Payments Agency <br>Lancaster House <br>Hampshire Court <br>Newcastle-upon-Tyne <br>NE4 7YH

E-mail: customer.service.centre@rpa.gsi.gov.uk <br>Tel: 0845 6037777

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### List of ERDP schemes that provide payments for land management:

- Countryside Stewardship Scheme
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Organic Aid Scheme
- Organic Farming Scheme
- Hill Farm Allowance
- Woodland Grant Scheme
- English Woodland Grant Scheme
- Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
- Energy Crops Scheme
- Farm Woodland Scheme
- Habitat Scheme
RDS is part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

If you enter into an Environmental Stewardship agreement, it will be with the Secretary of State acting through RDS and Defra, and this handbook will form part of it.