



**AGRICULTURE AND COUNTRYSIDE BOARD**

**HABITAT ENHANCEMENT**  
**PILOT SCHEME**

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## **HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PILOT SCHEME**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The Agriculture and Countryside Board has obtained limited funds for a pilot scheme to pay for specific land management projects. Projects to be included in the pilot scheme are:

1. The grazing management of specific wildlife habitats with sheep or cattle, so as to conserve and improve the plant species present;
2. The extensive management of flower rich hay meadows;
3. The production and management of wild bird food crops to provide feed for over-wintering and migrant birds and, by so doing, help to conserve the wild plants of arable fields.

Farmers, growers and landlords are invited to offer specific areas of land that they manage for inclusion in the pilot scheme. Land may be entered into the scheme for periods of from 12 months to 3 years.

The Pilot Scheme is scheduled to run from 2004 – 2006 inclusive.

#### **1.2 Objectives of the Pilot Scheme**

The pilot schemes objectives are to:

1. Develop a credible and worthwhile wildlife enhancement scheme, and
2. Achieve clearly defined wildlife conservation and enhancement.

The Scheme's wildlife objectives for farmed land are to:

1. Encourage native wild flowers, plants, insects and birds that are associated with low input farming;
2. Conserve old meadows and pastures by maintaining traditional grazing and hay-cutting patterns;
3. Encourage conservation grazing by livestock to maintain and improve coastal wildlife habitats;
4. Reduce the decline of farmland species of birds (and rare arable weeds) by growing wild bird food to sustain migratory and over-wintering birds; and to
5. Encourage the reintroduction and breeding of farmland birds.

#### **1.3 Target Areas and Habitats**

The pilot scheme will target specific farmland habitats as follows:

1. Wet marshy grassland, flower rich meadows and vegetated sand dunes will be eligible for payments to encourage conservation grazing by livestock.
2. Flower rich hay meadows will be eligible for a payment for specific management to encourage the natural development of wild flowers.
3. The growing of wild birdseed crops will be encouraged on land that is normally in an arable/'improved' grass rotation (proposals that include the ploughing or cultivation of traditional meadows will not be eligible).
4. The growing of spring cereals with reduced inputs and retention of weed rich stubble over-winter.

#### **1.4 Area of Land to be Included**

The maximum area of land entered into the scheme in each location will normally be 6 verges (or up to 20 verges for livestock grazing vegetated sand dunes), although individual farmers and growers may enter more than one area. An area of 2 verges, or a distinct field if that is smaller, is a 'realistic' minimum area so as to keep administration costs to a minimum, but individual cases will be considered on their merits. The size of the field will be determined by Board staff, using the Digi-map computer based island map.

### **2. THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

#### **2.1 Making an Application**

Applications should be made by 1<sup>st</sup> November each year, at the latest. Early application is encouraged. All applications must be made on the scheme application form, which must be completed as fully as possible.

#### **2.2 Site Assessment**

Following application, each site will be assessed to ensure that only appropriate sites are included and that ecologically diverse habitats are not damaged by cropping with wild bird seed crops.

#### **2.3 Criteria for Acceptance**

Your application will be considered alongside all others received by the deadline. Funds are strictly limited and so they will be allocated to provide the

most benefit to the countryside. **Not all applications can be accepted.** Each application will be assessed according a number of criteria, which will include landscape, wildlife habitat, geographical location and public access. The assessment will be undertaken by Board staff and by a qualified biologist, and applications will be ranked according to the benefits for wildlife that might be expected.

#### 2.4 Acceptance of applications

We will aim to notify successful applicants by 1<sup>st</sup> January following application. If your application is accepted you will be given the necessary claim forms so that you can make claims once the scheme has been satisfactorily completed.

### 3. MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND PAYMENT

#### 3.1 Management Agreement

Successful applicants will sign a clear document agreeing to the terms and conditions of the scheme. All areas of land accepted into the scheme must be managed as prescribed in an individual 'management plan'. This plan will be based on 'management guidelines' to be supplied by the Agriculture and Countryside Board. (N.B. Areas managed for the production of wild bird food must be sown by 1<sup>st</sup> May and not cultivated until after 15<sup>th</sup> February of the following year, unless prior approval has been gained. Cereal silage and fodder root crops, with over-wintered stubble, must be sown by the date prescribed in the appendix, and not ploughed in until after February 15<sup>th</sup> following.)

#### 3.2 Projects and Payment

Management payments will be made for approved projects in the pilot scheme, as follows:

| <i>Project</i>  | <i>Per Vergee</i> |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Managing cattle or sheep to graze flower rich wet, marshy grassland for the conservation and enhancement of wildflower species         | £50               |
| 2. Managing traditional flower rich hay meadows for the conservation and enhancement of wildflower species                                | £50               |
| 3. Providing and managing cattle to graze coastal areas and vegetated sand dunes  | £50               |
| 4. Establishing and managing an annual (11 month) wild bird food crop.  | £250              |
| 5. Establishing spring sown 'whole crop' cereal silage or spring sown fodder root crop, and retention of over-wintered stubble for birds. | £50               |

### **3.3 Method of Payment**

The Board will make a payment for each area accepted into the scheme in the following way:

#### ***(a) For the management of traditional hay meadows and provision of conservation grazing and (projects 1, 2, & 3)***

1. Grazing cattle or sheep on flower rich wet meadow and marshy grassland according to an agreed management plan: £50 per vergee / annum paid at the end of the agreed period.
2. Managing traditional hay meadows according to an agreed management plan: £50 per vergee / annum paid at the end of the agreed period.
3. Grazing cattle on coastal land / vegetated sand dunes according to an agreed management plan: £50 per vergee paid at the end of the agreed grazing period.

#### ***(b) For the production and management of wild bird food (project 4)***

1. 50% of the annual payment (£125) will be made on the successful establishment of the crop. The Board will provide approved wild-bird seed at no cost to the farmer or grower. If a crop fails to establish for any reason the farmer or grower may benefit from a discretionary payment to offset his actual costs, but not for the loss of any alternative crop.
2. 50% of the annual payment (final payment of £125) will be paid at the completion of the project. This will be on (or about) 31<sup>st</sup> March where wild bird food has been provided and managed to the satisfaction of the Board.

#### ***(c) For the establishment of spring sown 'whole crop' silage or fodder root crop, with over-wintered stubble for birds (project 5)***

1. Establishment of cereals (cereal mix) as 'whole crop' silage and subsequent management for wild birds: £50 / vergee paid at the end of the agreed period.
2. Establishment of fodder root crop to be grazed in situ, then left as stubble over-winter for wild birds: £50 / vergee paid at the end of the agreed period.

### **3.4 Checks on work carried out under the scheme**

A project officer will monitor the work to ensure that the conditions of the scheme have been complied with and that it has been carried out to the agreed standards. Payment will be dependent on the project officer approving the work.

### **3.5 Monitoring and evaluation of wildlife benefits**

Each site will be monitored during the course of the agreement for biodiversity impact. An evaluation of the projects will be undertaken so as to report to the Board on the benefit of the scheme. A condition of the scheme is that you will cooperate in this evaluation and permit access to staff and advisers.

### **3.6. Involvement of La Societe Guernesaise / Environment Guernsey**

Environment Guernsey has been fully consulted. Biologists employed by Environment Guernsey will be employed by the Board to undertake site inspections, monitoring and evaluation.

### **3.7. Keeping Records**

You will need to keep some basic information for your own purposes, such as the cost of work and annual payments. You will also need to keep details of management carried out to comply with the management agreement, such as the dates when animals were grazing in particular fields or dates of hay cutting, etc.

### **3.8. Mediation Procedure**

In the event of a dispute over the terms of the agreement or compliance with them, the issue will be dealt with by the Agriculture and Environment Adviser. If unresolved it may be referred to the Agriculture and Countryside Board's Deputy Chief Executive. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily at staff level, then it may be referred to the Agriculture and Countryside Board for final decision.

**Further information is available from Andrew Casebow, Agriculture and Countryside Board, Raymond Falla House, Longue Rue, St Martin, GY1 6AF. Phone: 01481 235741.**

## APPENDIX

### GUERNSEY COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT SCHEME

#### HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PILOT SCHEME

##### DETAILED PROVISIONS

#### **Conserving old meadows and pastures by maintaining traditional grazing and cutting patterns.**

These are precious but very threatened habitats. Hay meadows support a rich mix of grasses and flowers, including the Loose Flowered Orchid. Unimproved pastures and marshy grassland are also valuable for plants, butterflies and other insect species.

#### ***Managing cattle or sheep to graze flower rich wet, marshy grassland for the conservation and enhancement of wildflower species and the wildlife habitat (Project 1)***

Payment: £50 per vergee

- Grazing managing should remove the year's grass growth by light grazing over a period of time, normally for at least ten weeks between April to November, according to when grass growth and soil conditions are suitable. Management should avoid damaging the sward or creating a dense, matted sward. You should aim for a mixture of sward heights between 20-100mm at the end of the grazing season.
- Stocking levels and management objectives will be set according to the environmental interest in the field at the discretion of the Agriculture and Countryside Board.
- Rolling and chain harrowing should not be introduced.
- Thistles may be topped. The cutter should be set at 15 cm or more above ground level.

#### ***Managing traditional flower rich hay meadows for the conservation and enhancement of wildflower species (Project 2)***

Payment: £50 per vergee

- Cut hay late enough to allow plants to flower and seed, preferably after 15 July. Cutting should leave a sward height of 20-50mm.
- Cut sward should be lightly grazed in the autumn to achieve an average sward height of no more than 100 mm by the end of the growing season.
- Leave a one-metre strip uncut around the field to act as a wildlife refuge.
- Light applications of well-rotted farmyard manure may be acceptable where compatible with conservation of the meadow. **This must be agreed in advance and will be specified in the agreement.**
- Action should be taken to control noxious and invasive weeds by cultural methods. Pesticides must not be used. Spot treatment with pesticides may be permitted in special circumstances but only following specific permission from the Agriculture and Countryside Board.

#### **Conserving coastal wildlife habitats by maintaining traditional grazing and cutting patterns**

These include coastal grazing areas and managed sand dunes. They are valued for a variety of different landscapes, habitats and historical features and attract visitors for bird watching, picnicking and walking.

The Scheme's objectives for coastal land are to manage coastal grazing areas and sand dunes by traditional grazing patterns, to sustain both their wild character and the plants and animals they support.

#### ***Providing and managing cattle to graze coastal areas and vegetated sand dunes (Project 3)***

Payment for grazing management £50 per vergee (or £10 per animal/month for tethered cattle)

- Manage dune grasslands and coastal grazing areas by light grazing of cattle and/or sheep. The land must not be disturbed by poaching or overgrazing. Special care is required to ensure that management fully complies with the Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock and the Code of Recommendations for the Tethering of Livestock.
- Grazing management should aim to remove the year's grass growth by grazing without damaging the dunes or marshland.

#### **Reduce the decline of farmland species of birds by growing wild bird food to sustain migratory and over-wintering birds, and encourage the recolonisation and breeding of farmland species.**

Wild bird species that are associated with farmed land continue to decline. One cause has been the intensification of farming and lack of over-wintered stubbles left after the harvesting of crops.

Spring cereals provide a good nesting habitat for lapwing and skylark, whilst creation of an open, weed rich stubble, is vital for seed eating passerines (e.g. skylark, reed bunting, and the rarer tree sparrow and yellow hammer).

#### **Establishing and managing an annual wild bird food crop (project 4)**

£250 per vergee (or £150 per vergee in a subsequent year in the same field without reseeded)

Grow an approved mixture of seed-bearing crops in an area(s) that is managed throughout the agreement to provide a succession of food sources for wild birds. The area(s) should be established and managed as follows:

- Cultivate the soil in Feb/April of the first year of the agreement. Sow a wild bird seed mixture of at least 3 seed-bearing crops (e.g. cereals, kale and quinoa) either in field margin strips at least 2 metres wide, or in fields or blocks of land which are usually of between 2 and 6 vergees in size.
- The seed mixture detailed below is suitable as a wild bird seed mixture and should be sown at a seed rate of 6-8 kg per vergee. Appropriate seed will be provided by the Agriculture and Countryside Board.

##### ***Approved wild bird seed mix***

|                          | <b>% by weight</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Cereal (cereal mixtures) | 80%                |
| Kale (kale mixtures)     | 10%                |
| Quinoa                   | 10%                |

An alternative approved wild bird seed mixture may be available following agreement with La Societe Guernesiaise and the RSPB.

- The area must be managed throughout the course of the agreement to provide a continuing supply of feed for seed-eating birds. The mixture should normally be expected to require re-establishment at least every other year in order to retain a productive seed mixture.
- The seed mixture will often regenerate naturally, or following a pass with a tined cultivator. Where this option is undertaken then a lower payment of £150 per vergee is available. When the mixture is being re-established, removal of the plant cover, cultivation and re-establishment must not take place before 15<sup>th</sup> February.
- Fertiliser may only be applied when its absence will jeopardise successful establishment and seed yield.
- Glyphosate may be applied as an overall spray immediately before spring re-sowing, in order to help re-establishment of the crop. Otherwise herbicide application must be limited to the use of a weed wiper or spot treatment for the control of spear thistle, creeping thistle, broad-leaved dock, curled dock, common ragwort.

#### ***The establishment of spring sown 'whole crop' silage or fodder root crop, with over-wintered stubble for birds (project 5)***

##### **Spring sown whole crop silage**

- Cereal (or cereal mixture) crop to be established by 15<sup>th</sup> March where soil conditions permit, without the use of herbicides.
- Reduced inputs – agreed fertiliser use and no crop pesticides.
- Silage not to be cut until after 15<sup>th</sup> July.
- Stubble to be left over-winter and not ploughed until after 15<sup>th</sup> February.

##### **Fodder root crop**

- Establish fodder / fodder root crop (e.g. kale, forage turnips, etc) in late May or June, without use of herbicides.
- Reduced inputs – agreed fertiliser use and no crop pesticides.
- Strip graze from October onwards.
- Stubble to be left over-winter and not ploughed until after 15<sup>th</sup> February.

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HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PILOT SCHEME

APPLICATION FORM

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

I am interested in taking part in the Habitat Enhancement Pilot Scheme to:

*(please tick those that apply to you)*

- 1. Manage cattle or sheep to graze flower rich, wet marshy grassland to enhance wildlife (project 1).
- 2. Manage traditional flower rich hay meadows to enhance wildlife (project 2).
- 3. Manage cattle to graze coastal marshes and vegetated sand dunes to enhance wildlife (project 3).
- 4. Sow and manage a crop of wild bird food (project 4).
- 5. Sow and manage a 'whole crop' cereal silage or fodder root crop, with over-wintered stubble for wild birds (project 5)

The location of the area(s) of land that I should like to enter into the scheme is (are) as follows:

.....

.....

.....

The total area is approx ..... verges

I understand that this is a pilot scheme with only limited resources. As a consequence only approved areas of land will be offered an agreement. Some landowners may be offered limited agreements to grow wild bird seed whereby the Board will only provide seed for sowing and pay the legitimate costs of agreed cultivation work.

Signed..... Date.....