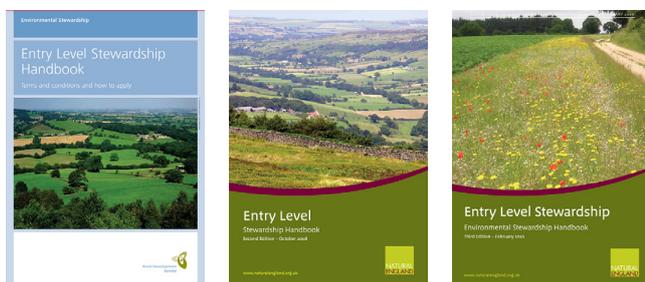


Environmental Stewardship

Supplement for the 1st 2nd & 3rd Edition ELS Handbook

January 2013



1. What is the Supplement for?

This Handbook Supplement provides details of new options that will be available to existing agreement holders whose agreement started on the 1st February 2007 or later. They are part of a set of changes to Environmental Stewardship aimed at improving the delivery of environmental outcomes from the scheme.

Use this Supplement if you want to amend your agreement to include any of the new options on or after 1st January 2013.

The new options are:

- EB14 Hedgerow restoration
- EF23 Supplementary feeding in winter for farmland birds
- EK20 Ryegrass seed set as winter/spring food for birds
- EK21 Legume and herb rich swards

When your agreement has been amended, this supplement will form part of your legal agreement with Natural England and must be retained for reference. It contains the rules and management prescriptions you must follow for your selected option(s).

Unless otherwise specifically stated or explained in this supplement, all the scheme rules and terms and conditions as set out in the edition of scheme handbook applicable to your agreement also apply.

2. How do I Apply?

If the start date of your agreement is the 1st February 2007 or later the new options will be available for you to add to your agreement by amendment. **Please note: Any amendment to your agreement to add the new options can only take effect from 1st January 2013 onwards.** If you wish to apply to amend your agreement please contact Natural England enquiries on 0845 600 3078.

If you wish to improve the environmental performance of your existing ELS agreement by amending your option selection to include one or more of the new options in this supplement you can do so without impacting on your ability to make further changes to your agreement in the future. However, this type of change will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:

- **The change should reduce the presence of low-priority options in the agreement (see below).** The ELS points released by the removal of low-priority options should be replaced by the addition of an equivalent value of high priority options in this supplement (or other priority options as set out on the ELS Priority Options web page at www.naturalengland.org.uk/es).
- **Your ELS agreement should have at least two years left before it expires.** This will allow time for the new options to establish and have a positive impact on the environment.
- **Additional options must be taken from either the same version of the handbook that applies to your original agreement (the version of the handbook on which your application for your original agreement was based and then accepted by Natural England), or from this supplement.**
- **All other eligibility criteria must continue to be met – including the 30 points/ha target**

Input from a Natural England funded adviser is recommended but not essential. To request a free on-farm visit, call 0300 060 1695.

Table 1 Low-priority options that must be reduced in the agreement as a result of the change.

Option	Option description
EB1	Hedgerow management for landscape (on both sides of a hedge)
EB2	Hedgerow management for landscape (on one side of a hedge)
EB4	Stone-faced hedgebank management on both sides
EB5	Stone-faced hedgebank management on one side
EB8	Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB1)
EB9	Combined hedge and ditch management (incorporating EB2)
EB12	Earth bank management on both sides
EB13	Earth bank management on one side
EC1	Protection of infield trees on arable land
EE1	2m buffer strip on cultivated land
EE2	4m buffer strip on cultivated land
EE3	6m buffer strip on cultivated land
EE4	2m buffer strip on intensive grassland
EE5	4m buffer strip on intensive grassland
EK5	Mixed stocking
EL2	Permanent grassland with low inputs on SDA land

You must tell us about any proposed amendments and we must agree them before you make any changes to your options. We will send you a Land Transfer and Amendment request form (ERDP/LTA1), to complete and return. Your amendment will not be valid until you have received a letter from us agreeing to the amendment and advising you of the date from which it will take effect. If it is successful, we will provide you with confirmation within 3 months of receipt of a valid request form.

We do not expect to amend an agreement more than once during its five-year term unless it is to achieve environmental benefits, as detailed above.

Photographs

If you are required to supply photographs in support of your application, (because an option you have selected requires you to do so), each photograph must clearly show the feature to be managed. Ideally, the whole of the feature should be on one photograph, but where necessary you should use more.

Each photograph should display the date on which it was taken and must be clearly numbered. The photographs should be cross-referenced with a map showing the position the photographs were taken from, the number of the photograph and an arrow indicating the direction of the shot. You can submit the photographs in either digital format (on a CD) or as colour prints (at least 6"x4").

3. Management Options and Supplements

3.1 Options

EB14 Hedgerow restoration

10 points per m

The aim of this option is to rejuvenate hedgerows on the farm to encourage the development of thick, dense, continuous hedges, which link other hedges and habitats, such as ponds and woodlands to benefit wildlife and improve the historic landscape character.

Hedges that are a priority for restoration

- Short, over trimmed and gappy hedges, or tall, thin and gappy hedges.
- Hedges connected to woods or adjacent to ponds, or other watercourses, to link habitats.
- Hedges adjacent to other management options such as buffer strips, field corners and nectar mixes, as this will add value to the habitat.
- Hedges alongside public rights of way or in conspicuous parts of the farm where landscape and access improvement can be best appreciated.
- Hedges of particular historic value such as parish boundaries

You must have management control over both sides of the hedge and of the land adjacent to the hedge, and the hedge must fit the eligibility criteria for all hedge options.

- If your agreement started before October 2008 see page 36 for 1st edition handbook.
- If your agreement started between October 2008 and January 2010 see page 30-31 of the 2nd edition handbook.
- If your agreement started between February 2010 and December 2012 see page 55-56 of the 3rd edition handbook.

How can a Hedge be restored?

There are two methods of restoration available under this option:

- Hedge laying. This involves the complete rejuvenation of the hedge by partially cutting through the woody stems close to the ground level and laying them over to create a dense barrier, from which re-growth should shoot. Hedges or sections of hedges suitable for laying are those comprising shrubs at least 3m in height with frequent stems up to 25cm in diameter. There must be sufficient suitable stems to make a laid hedge of living pleachers (the laid stems).
- Hedge gapping up. This involves establishing new plants into gaps in an existing hedge. It can also be combined with laying to ensure the development of a continuous hedge. To be eligible for gapping up at least one-quarter of the hedge must still consist of shrubs and/or trees.

You can enter up to 40m on your application form. This represents the annual commitment. Hence, if you enter 40m on your application form, you will be required to complete 200m over the full 5 years of your agreement (or 400m if you have a 10-year ELS/HLS agreement).

You can complete the work ahead of schedule but you must have completed at least as much as the annual commitment for each agreement year completed. Points earned will be based on the annual commitment, not the actual amount of work completed in any single year.

For example, where the annual commitment is 40m					
End of agreement year	1	2	3	4	5
Minimum total length restored	40	80	120	160	200
Maximum total length restored	200	200	200	200	200
Points earned	400	400	400	400	400

Hedges, or lengths of hedges, in this option can also be entered into the hedge management options (EB1, EB2, EB3, EB8, EB9 and EB10).

Management requirements

For this option, you must comply with the following:

- Obtain current, dated photographs of the hedge to be restored as evidence of its condition when you joined the scheme, retain these photographs and submit a copy with your application.
- At the end of the agreement at least 90 percent of the restored hedge must be continuous with no gap (other than the gateways) more than 1m wide. If sections, more than 1m wide, of laid hedge die after restoration then the gaps should be planted with new hedge plants, following the gapping up prescriptions.
- Following restoration, prevent damage by livestock and other animals such as rabbits.
- Any fences must be sited at least 1.2m from the centre of the hedge.
- Retain all historic boundary features e.g. stone gate posts.
- Retain any existing hedgerow trees where they are a characteristic feature of the local landscape. They must not be damaged by fencing wire or used as fence posts.
- Only apply herbicide to spot-treat or weed-wipe for the control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive non-native species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese Knotweed).

In addition, for hedge laying, you must comply with the following:

- Before work starts, all old fencing must be removed and disposed of appropriately. Also, cut and pull out bramble and other scrambling plants where these will hinder laying the cut stems.
- Lay when the hedge is dormant, between 1 November and 1 March, in the style customary to the local landscape. However, in exceptional circumstances, work may continue up to 1 April provided you conduct a survey to ensure that there are no nesting birds.
- Twiggy material may be placed over the cut stems to provide some protection to the re-growth from grazing animals. Wood may be stacked to provide valuable dead wood habitat for wildlife.
- Cut material may be chipped and used as a mulch to control weeds.
- Site any fires to minimise environmental damage. Material should either be burnt immediately or left until the end of the bird breeding season (i.e. September) as piles of brash are attractive nesting sites for birds. Bonfire sites must not be sited on low-intensity grassland, other wildlife-rich areas or areas of historic or archaeological interest.

In addition, for gapping-up you must comply with the following:

- Thoroughly clear gaps of existing vegetation.
- Plant dormant two-year-old bare rooted stock (45cm-60cm) between 1 November and 1 March, avoiding periods when the ground is frozen or waterlogged. Plant a minimum of six plants per metre in a double staggered row with at least 30cm between rows.

- Plant in line with existing hedgerow. Plant species to match those in the existing hedge. Single species planting can be used e.g. to restore hawthorn enclosure hedges. Plants should be of British native origin.
- Any newly planted hedge plants that die must be replaced in the following planting season.
- You may control injurious weeds (i.e. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort) or invasive alien species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed) by use of a mulch.

EF23 Supplementary feeding in winter for farmland birds

630 points /tonne

Please note this option is subject to approval by the European Commission.

Many farmland birds, including yellowhammer, grey partridge, tree sparrow, corn bunting, linnet and skylark, require seed food throughout the year. A decline in seed availability during the non-breeding season has been a major cause of decline in many seed-eating species. Overwinter stubbles and wild bird seed mixtures provide winter food for seed eaters, but this has typically run out by mid-winter, leaving these birds with a 'hungry gap' before natural food resources become available again in the spring.

Providing cereal, oilseed and specialised grains will help farmland birds both survive through this hungry gap and also enter the breeding season in much improved condition.

This is a 'rotational option'. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal farm rotation, but the same total tonnage must be maintained each year.

This option can only be used with options EF2 Wild bird seed mixture and/or EF22 Extended overwintered stubble. The maximum amount of this option that can be entered into the agreement is 0.5 tonnes per hectare of EF2 wild bird seed mixture and/or 0.2 tonnes per hectare EF22 Extended overwintered stubble.

Please note, where the option is located on areas ineligible for SPS (for example, an area of hard standing), the SPS eligibility rules will still apply and the feeding area cannot be claimed for SPS.

For this option, you must comply with the following:

- Select a feeding area/s either on firm free-draining farm tracks or hard standing areas close to existing areas of overwintered stubbles or wild bird seed mixtures or on overwintered stubbles or wild bird seed mixtures. Selecting areas next to hedges, bushes or trees (shelter belts) to provide a safe haven for the feeding birds would be beneficial.
- Spread the food on the ground at least once a week from 1 January until 31 March. Hoppers (feed distributors) may be used to support ground feeding but should not be the sole method of supplementary feeding. Move hoppers regularly and/or protect them by guards or cages to reduce the impact of vermin.
- The food must be a mixture of wheat and oilseed rape (75%), red millet, white millet, and canary seed (25%). Tailings (small seeds removed from the harvested crop) are not permitted
- Distribute enough food to match consumption, ensuring a fresh supply of food is maintained without leaving seed unconsumed. This is especially important where ground feeding is undertaken.
- A 'feeding diary' must be kept – to include details of:
 - mixture (weight of components and cost)
 - date of feeding
 - amount fed
 - location of feeding.

In addition, all receipts for the purchase of seed must be retained and made available on inspection.

The aim of this option is to allow silage fields to go to seed in autumn, providing a food resource throughout winter and into the 'hungry gap' in February for buntings (such as yellowhammer) and other granivorous birds. It may also increase abundance of invertebrates and small mammals.

This option is only available on swards containing at least 50 per cent ryegrass (perennial, Italian or hybrid). Temporary grassland (sown to grass or other herbaceous forage for less than 5 years) and grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown within the last 5 years are eligible for this option. It can be applied on whole or part-fields. If used on part-fields the area should be at least 10m wide. For most birds it will be beneficial to site next to a hedge but for skylark it should be sited away from trees and hedges.

This is a 'rotational option'. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal farm rotation, but the same total hectareage must be maintained each year.

There is no restriction on use of lime, fertiliser, manure, fungicides, insecticides or selective herbicides prior to taking the silage cut(s).

For this option, you must comply with the following:

- Close the field for at least 5 weeks and take a silage cut by 31 May.
- On swards containing at least 70 per cent Italian or hybrid ryegrass, you may also take a second cut of silage (or hay) by 30 June.
- After cutting and removal, close the field, allowing the sward to flower and set seed in the autumn. Leave the sward undisturbed with no harrowing, rolling, cultivation, application of manure or fertiliser until at 1 March. You may then destroy the sward or restore it by harrowing or grazing. (This may be helped by the establishment of fallen seeds).

EK21 Legume-and herb-rich swards

200 points per ha

This option will provide habitat and food for invertebrates including crop pollinators, benefit soil structure, mitigate climate change by reducing nitrogen fertiliser use and provide high-quality forage for livestock.

This option is only available on temporary grassland (sown to grass or other herbaceous forage for less than five years) or grassland that has been cultivated and re-sown in the last five years. It can be applied on whole- or part-fields.

This is a 'rotational option'. This means that it can move around the farm within the normal farm rotation, but the same total hectareage must be maintained each year.

For this option, you must comply with the following:

- In the first 12 months of the agreement, establish a mixed sward of grasses, legumes and herbs/wildflowers (e.g. chicory, yarrow, ribwort, plantain, forage burnet, black knapweed, common sorrel). This is usually most reliably achieved by sowing into a clean seedbed but could be done by oversowing existing grassland following creation of 50 per cent bare ground.
- For the remainder of the agreement the sward must contain a minimum cover of 10 per cent red clover and an additional 10 per cent other legumes plus herbs, plus wildflowers (cover does not include white clover, creeping buttercup or injurious weeds). The sward must include at least 5 species of grass, 3 species of legume (including bird's-trefoil), and 5 species of herb/wildflower.
- Re-establish if necessary, on the same or a different field, to maintain these minima.
- Manage by cutting or grazing but allow to flower by resting for a 3-5 week period between 1 May and 31 July. You must delay cutting until the majority of red clover plants have started to flower.

- Do not apply pesticides except herbicides to spot treat or weed-wipe for control of injurious weeds (i.e. creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks or common ragwort); invasive non-native species (e.g. Himalayan balsam, rhododendron or Japanese knotweed); or bracken.
- You may apply lime and organic manures.
- You may apply inorganic fertilisers provided they do not contain nitrogen.



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