

## Arable Reversion to Low - Medium Input Grass

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Funding is offered take whole fields or part fields out of arable production for up to 5 years into a low - medium input grass ley, with a maximum nitrogen (N) input of up to 100kgN/ha. The scheme can be applied on whole fields or part fields and could be targeted on land that is difficult to farm, has low productivity or suffers from issues such as erosion, waterlogging or run-off.

### Payment rate

An annual payment rate of

- £600/ha/year on fields in the High Priority Area
- £400/ha/year on fields in the Wider Safeguard Zone

### Length of scheme

- Up to 5-year agreement from the month of establishment.
- Agreements can be made bespoke to suit your farming system, please speak to your Wessex Water catchment adviser.

### Benefits

- The measure can be used across a whole field or in unproductive areas of a field eg: awkward corners or frequently waterlogged areas.
- Continuous ground cover over winter may reduce soil run-off and erosion.
- Reduced N leaching.
- Increases soil organic matter

### Eligible areas

- This scheme is available to all fields within the Safeguard Zone that have been in arable production for at least 5 years.
- This scheme can be applied to whole fields or parts of fields to square them up or take out unproductive areas
- Up to 20ha of land per holding can be entered into the scheme.

### Non – eligible areas

- Land already funded as arable reversion by other schemes (such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Biodiversity Net Gain or nutrient neutrality).
- Do not use this measure on fields/part fields that have already been taken out of arable production.
- Areas of land that are being reverted for other income streams – eg; Solar Pannels
- Areas of land to be used for vehicular access.
- Land outside of the Safeguard Zone.

## **Scheme requirements**

### ***Establishment***

- Establish a low input grass mix between 15<sup>th</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> May or 15<sup>th</sup> July – 15<sup>th</sup> October
- Assess whether there are any issues of soil compaction and, if necessary, plan appropriate timely cultivations such as subsoiling to resolve these before establishing the new sward.
- Aim to achieve 80% ground cover by 1st December.
- Grass species mix – A mixed sward of traditional hay meadow grasses. Mix should contain at least one agricultural grass.

### ***Weed management***

- To control weeds and ensure that a dense sward is established, in the first 12 months after establishment the field may be topped regularly.
- Weed control by cultural measures – cutting and topping is the preferred method of weed management.
- Weeds may be sprayed using a selective herbicide following an assessment of weed coverage with the catchment adviser.

### ***Inputs***

- Applications of N, P and K are permitted
  - Maximum N inputs up to 100kgN/ha – may be from fertiliser and organic manures
  - Maintenance application of P & K
- Applications of lime are permitted.
- Pesticide applications are not permitted except for spot-spraying of injurious weeds.

### ***Returning land to arable production***

- Terminate the grass sward in the spring and follow with a spring crop to reduce the risk of nitrate leaching and maximise crop uptake of any fertility built up by the grass ley.

### ***Cutting & topping***

- In the first 12 months grass should be regularly cut during the growing season to encourage tillering and to control weeds.
- Once fully established the grass may be cut and removed for hay/haylage at least once a year.
- After the first 12 months, grass may be cut or topped in the autumn to tidy the field up going into the winter and encourage tillering.
- Ensure you do not set the cutting height too low. Allow at least 1 tiller/blade to be left after the cut to allow photosynthesis to continue and therefore faster regrowth, to minimise bare ground being exposed. This will normally equate to a cutting height of between 4-8cm depending on grass varieties.

### ***Grazing***

- Grazing is not permitted in this scheme.

## **Application process**

- Please fill out the expression of interest form, stating an approximate area of land you wish to enter into the scheme.
- Upon submitting the Expression of interest form, your Catchment Adviser will be in contact with you to discuss the scheme further.
- Once the scheme and area is agreed a formal contract will be drawn up between the Farmer and Wessex Water.

## **Record keeping, validation and data collection**

- In entering the scheme, you are agreeing to allow a Wessex Water adviser to visit land in a scheme for visual inspection before, during and after the implementation of the scheme.
- In entering the scheme a Wessex Water catchment adviser may request farm records from you demonstrating fertiliser rates, the change in cropping, stocking rates etc.
- In entering the scheme Wessex Water may carry out soil sampling, porous pots, grain samples and crop tissue samples for nutrient analysis. Any data collected will be shared with the farmer. Wessex Water will store data on an internal Wessex Water database and may be used to contribute to a larger aggregated and anonymised data set.

## **Payment terms**

- Payment will be made annually.
- To claim payment for the scheme your Wessex Water adviser will request you to send an invoice to be sent directly to them.
- Wessex Water payment terms are end of the month plus 30 days
- The invoice should be submitted between the 1st – 31st January to guarantee payment by 31st March.
- You may be required by the Wessex Water payments team to be registered as “suppliers” to Wessex Water Services Limited, please ensure paperwork is filled out and returned