4.5 Environmental management and conservation

Managing semi-natural habitats

4.5.18
Areas of semi-natural habitat, such as moorland, heathland, wetland, grazing marsh, dunes and scrub have reduced significantly in the UK.

4.5.19
You should conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats within your organic farming system by:

- managing your grazing to encourage healthy vegetation and to reduce localised over-grazing
- moving feeding sites on a regular basis to prevent poaching
- siting feeding areas away from sensitive vegetation, and
- cutting or crushing rushes in late August and bracken in late June or July (unless a qualified advisor suggests other times are more suitable).

4.5.20
You may:

- burn heather and muir, if you keep to the recognised heather and muir burning codes
- with our permission, sow clover into unimproved pastures provided they are identified in a whole farm conservation plan (standards 4.5.6–4.5.8)
- sow clover on a ‘recognised site’ (standard 4.5.4) only if an appropriate conservation body advises you to do so, and
- cut turf or peat from peat bogs only for your own domestic fuel supply.

4.5.21
You must not:

- improve or add drainage that will affect recognised areas of significant conservation value, or
- allow livestock to overgraze, poach or damage valuable habitats.

Managing trees and woodland

4.5.22
Trees and woodland play an important role in maintaining the ecological balance on organic farms, providing a habitat for wildlife, including pest predators.

4.5.23
Mature trees and woodland are major contributors to the beauty and amenity value of the landscape. Individual trees and woodland play a vital part in conserving landscape and species diversity.
4.5.24

You should manage your trees and woodland to enhance your farm, local environment and the wider landscape by:

- maintaining and managing your trees in keeping with local custom and woodland practice
- integrating re-planting programmes with existing woodland and trees
- natural regeneration, coppicing and other traditional management practices
- creating new woodland on suitable sites using native species
- protecting newly planted or regenerated woodland against livestock
- using native and local shrubs, trees, seeds and plant material from local suppliers
- maintaining mature specimen trees that are not dangerous
- planting replacement trees if you remove any
- ploughing no closer to the trunk of any tree than a line drawn vertically through the outermost canopy, and
- not planting trees in areas where farmland waders breed.

4.5.25

With our permission, you may clear-fell woodland.

4.5.26

You must not plant on ‘recognised sites’ (see standard 4.5.4) unless you get approval from the appropriate conservation body and us.

Managing farm buildings

4.5.27

Buildings are part of the farming landscape. They are wildlife habitats, landscape features and can be of historical value.

4.5.28

You should build, develop and maintain your farm buildings in keeping with the surrounding environment by:

- maintaining and restoring old buildings to their original form, using traditional or local materials if possible
- taking advice from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Cadw or other appropriate bodies when considering conversion or demolition
- considering the environmental and aesthetic impact when siting and constructing new farm buildings, and
- providing roosts or nest sites of bats and barn owls in new buildings and conversions.

4.5.29

You must get approval from the appropriate statutory conservation agency before you do any work that may affect the nesting and roosting sites of owls, bats and other endangered species.

4.5.30

You must not use wood preservatives that are harmful to bats on any buildings.
Managing water resources

4.5.31

You must:

- avoid exploitation and depletion of your water resources, and
- take suitable measures to prevent salinisation of water and soil where relevant.