

Management of lowland heathland (LH1) Higher Tier

£274 per ha

Where to use this option

Whole or part parcel

Non-rotational

Only on lowland heathland priority habitat; this can include areas of acid grassland mixed with heathland

Where this option cannot be used:

on extensive grassland areas (without heather or dwarf shrubs) as these should be put into a relevant grassland option, such as:

GS6 - Management of species-rich grassland

GS13 - Management of grassland for target features

on upland heathland over 300m above sea level and within the moorland line and the severely disadvantaged area

Features that can be included in this option

The following features can be included if they are part of the land, even if they are ineligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS):

bare ground

open water

scrub

How this option will benefit the environment

It creates a diverse mosaic of vegetation, allowing all heathland types (such as wet or dry heath, transitional heaths, acidic mires and coastal heaths) to flourish. This includes pioneer heath and bare ground, which benefits rarer invertebrates, birds, reptiles and plants.

If successful there will be heathland areas with a diverse mosaic structure, including undisturbed bare ground and vegetation in all stages of its life cycle.

The cover of undesirable species will be low and species that increase when undermanaged (bracken, trees, dense grass tussocks) kept under control. Locally characteristic plant communities and the species they support (such as nightjar, woodlark, smooth snake and sand lizard, where within their range) are common.

REQUIREMENTS

Agreement holders are likely to need to:

create a wide range of heather ages and structure through appropriate management (grazing, burning and/or cutting)

provide bare ground cover between 1% and 10%

maintain tree and scrub cover below 15%

maintain the full range of age classes of Western or European gorse

manage bracken so that cover is less than 10% in dense canopy

The agreement will set out what must not be done. It is likely agreement holders will not be allowed to:

create bare ground on historic or archaeological features

use fertilisers or manures

apply any lime

plough, cultivate or re-seed
carry out supplementary feeding
use pesticides, including herbicides, except to spot treat or weed wipe or to control injurious weeds or invasive non-natives

Keeping records

A valid Wildfire Risk Assessment and a Wildfire Response Plan (agreed with fire service) will be needed.

For guidance and example plans [see the Forestry Commission's guide, http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCPG022.pdf/%24FILE/FCPG022.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCPG022.pdf/%24FILE/FCPG022.pdf).

Copies of the Wildfire Risk Assessment and, where required, the Wildfire Response Plan and Wildfire Management Plan will need to be submitted with the first claim.

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them on request:

field operations at the parcel level, including associated invoices

consents or permissions connected with this work

any sites grazed will require a grazing activity record

On your annual claim you will be asked to declare that you haven't carried out any activities prohibited by

the option requirements.

You should also be aware that at the start of each claim year, a percentage of agreement holders will also be asked to take and submit the following photographic records:

photographs of the management undertaken

Applicants will need to send the following with their application:

Photographs of the existing bracken

The detailed requirements for this option will be tailored to the Higher Tier site. Applicants should discuss and agree these requirements with their adviser.

RELATED OPTIONS

The following options and supplements can be located on the same area as this option:

BE3 – Management of hedgerows

OR2 – Organic conversion – unimproved permanent grassland

OT2 – Organic land management – unimproved permanent grassland

SP1 - Difficult sites supplement

SP3 - Bracken control supplement

SP4 - Control of invasive plant species supplement

SP5 - Shepherding supplement

SP6 - Cattle grazing supplement

SP7 – Introduction of cattle grazing on the Isles of Scilly

SP8 - Native breeds at risk supplement

SP9 - Threatened species supplement

WT3 – Management of ditches of high environmental value

ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS OPTION

*The following section gives advice on carrying out this option successfully but does **not** form part of the requirements for this option.*

Heathland is characteristic of acidic and nutrient-poor soils. Heathland sites should be managed to keep

their ecological value, which depends on an open and diverse vegetation structure.

Sensitive, sustainable management will be needed, using a combination of appropriate grazing, cutting and removal and/or burning. In some cases herbicide application may be needed (such as for some scrub or bracken control).

Larger sites will often also include areas of acid grassland or wetland habitats - the transitional zones between heathland and such habitats are particularly valuable. If a heathland site is neglected or poorly managed, it is likely to lead to bare ground disappearing and an increase in cover of scrub, bracken, gorse, invasive grasses or secondary woodland.

The removal or disturbance of top soil may be needed, to create or maintain some features, such as bareground. Do not create bare ground on historic or archaeological features. Such features are best protected by implementing an appropriate grazing or cutting regime, and/or preventing scrub and bracken growth.

Further information

Symes, N. & Day, J. 2003. A practical guide to the restoration and management of lowland heathland, The RSPB, Sandy