

Updates for BPS 2026



Whole Farm Plan – rules for 2026

Claimants must carry out at least 2 of the 5 parts (*that are relevant to their business*) of the Whole Farm Plan **to be in receipt of their BPS support in 2026**. Guidance therefore suggests failure to do so will result in 100% reduction of subsidy payments.

Those audit / plans that have been undertaken to date must be in date and fully completed to be eligible for 2026.

| Type of Audit / Plan | Who's it for | Grant Funding available in 2025 | Lifespan of the Audit / Plan |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Carbon Audit | All farmers & crofters | Yes | All <i>conducted</i> within the five-year period Before 15 May 2026 (16 May '21 onwards) |
| Soil Analysis | All farmers & crofters claiming Region 1 land & apply organic & non-organic fertilisers to it | Yes | |
| Biodiversity Audit of the holding | All farms & crofters that claim permanent land | None | |
| Animal Health and Welfare Plan | All farmers & crofters that keep livestock | Yes | Will be renewed annually |
| Integrated Pest Management Plan | All farmers & crofters that use pesticides & herbicides | None | |

There is support through Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) towards the cost of some of the above audits.

You can claim:

- Financial support towards the cost of soil analysis
- £500 towards the cost of having a Carbon Audit undertaken
- £750 towards first time claimants of animal health & welfare interventions and £500 for those who have benefitted in previous years.

As these audit / plans are becoming mandatory to be in receipt of subsidy from 2026, it is likely that such PSF funding will end on 31 December 2025. We therefore urge claimants to act now and utilise the funding over the next six months.

To date, we are seeing that many arable businesses who undertake regular soil analysis of their cropped grounds have not been analysing the grassland which may be on seasonal leys etc, and does receive some fertiliser. Please remember it is all ground that receives fertiliser/FYM that must have had analysis undertaken by 2028, for **P, K, pH and Carbon**.

Capital Grants 2026

There has been much talk around capital grants, and letters received 4th June 2025 confirm that a grant scheme will go live this summer. We anticipate an announcement at the Royal Highland Show.

Funding will not be prescriptive, instead a list of ineligible items will be distributed, and successful claimants will be able to use the financial support to 'carry out capital investments that are beneficial to your business to make them more efficient or that benefit the climate and nature'.

Grants will be targeted but not exclusive towards new / young entrants.

We believe this will be a payment upfront to aid a quick turnaround of purchase, and claimants will need to provide proof of purchase and relevant bank statements (from the account that is in receipt of the BPS) prior to the 31st December 2025.

No official guidance on these grants however has been published, simply the statement that 'More information will be announced in the summer' - we will update as we learn on this.

Greening Rules are changing for 2026 – main changes

(based on guidance published 2.6.25):

The majority of the Greening exemptions are being removed (Organic claimants remain exempt), **therefore if a claimant has at least 15 Ha of arable land** (inc. Temporary Grass) **then they must enter min. 5% of their arable area into Ecological Focus Area (EFA) annually.** (Note. *This is suggested that minimum EFA area may increase to 7% from 2027*)

This therefore means grassland holdings that grow an area of forage crops e.g. stubble turnips or kale, and then sow the field back into temporary grass, the combined area of these arable crops may exceed the 15 Ha limit. If so, they must meet Greening Rules from 2026.

The Weighting of existing Environmental Focus Area (EFA) options remains unchanged, however the rules surrounding these options are changing.

Furthermore, 4 new options are being introduced, therefore claimants **will have 11 options to choose from.**

For many options now, you no longer have to submit an EFA map, but you must retain an up-to-date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA. locations.

| EFA Option | Location | Weighting | EFA Map to be submitted |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fallow land | On arable land | 1 | N |
| Margins | On, adjacent or within 5m of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option | 1.5 | N |
| Green Cover Crops | On arable land | 0.3 | N |
| Catch Crops | On arable land | 0.3 | N |
| Nitrogen-fixing crops | On arable land | 1 | N |
| Hedges | On, adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option | 10m ² or 5m ² | N |
| Agro-Forestry | Planted on arable land that was BPS eligible | 1 | Y |
| Low input grassland | Permanent grassland which is not rough grazing | 0.2 | N |
| Herb and legume rich pastures | On arable land | 1.5 | N |
| Agro-forestry low density planting | On arable land, or permanent grassland, not rough grazing | 2 | Y |
| Unharvested crop | On arable land | 1.5 | N |

Summary of Main Changes to existing EFA Habitats

Fallow rule changes/highlights:

- Fallow land **cannot be bare soil or stubble**. Land must be either in:
 - A diverse mix Temporary Grassland - with at least 3 flowering species
 - A Wild Flower Mix – not stands of single species;
 - A Wild Bird Seed mix – including min. 2 of the groups/species in guidance; or
 - A Soil Conditioning crop.
- These covers can be established during the Fallow period if not established the year prior.

EFA Margins rule changes/highlights:

- The minimum width of a margin now 3 meters (was 1m), up to 20m wide;
- Where a new margin comprising grass sward is created, must be a diverse grass sward containing pollen bearing plants;
- Margins, as before, can have their cover changed to establish a wildflower mid, wild bird seed mix, or diverse grass sward within the managed period;
- Avoid spraying and fertilising within 2m of the margin to reduce damage to plan & invertebrate diversity;
- Margins adjacent to hedges can start from the centre of the hedge – however the 2m from centre of hedge (GAEC Strip) must remain uncultivated (**unless establishing a green cover where one doesn't already exist**).

EFA Green Cover rule changes/highlights:

- The number of species that can be included for this option have increased
- You must therefore establish a green cover consisting of two or more of the following crops as the predominant crops:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| • alfalfa, | • white clover, | • triticale, |
| • barley, | • buckwheat | • vetch, |
| • alsike clover, | • mustard | • kale, |
| • <u>balansa</u> clover, | • oats, | • forage rape, |
| • crimson clover, | • phacelia, | • stubble turnip, |
| • red clover, | • radish, | • winter beans |
| • <u>persian</u> clover | • rye, | |
- This option **can be grazed** once the crop is established (even if before 31 December)
- Cover crops can be broadcast into standing crops, prior to harvest

EFA Catch Crop rule changes/highlights:

- The number of crop types that can be under-sown has been expanded to include oilseed rape and maize, not just cereals. Beans can be sown in a mix with Cereals;
- You can now control injurious weeds and invasive weeds with herbicide post-harvest
- You can graze the EFA Catch Crop after harvest of the main crop
- Arable Silage for Stock Feed is not eligible

EFA Nitrogen-Fixing crops rule changes/highlights:

- The number of species that can be included for this option have increased to include:
 - alsike clover
 - balansa clover
 - berseem clover
 - red clover
 - sweet clover
 - fenugreek
- The restriction on harvest date has been removed, therefore can harvest prior to 1st August
- This option still has the same restrictions as before – must have at least two species & margins surrounding the crop(s).

EFA Hedges rule changes/highlights:

- An EFA hedge is now defined as:
 - having a length of at least 20m
 - claimed length can **include any gaps less than 5m** (previously 20m) – to encourage gapping up planting
 - Is no more than 3m wide from the centre of the hedge into any one field.
- **Hedge cutting dates have been dramatically reduced to 1st December to 28th February** (to encompass bird nesting and rearing seasons)
- Recommendation added that you should not cut any more than one third of the length of your hedges managed under this option in any one year (aligning with AECS)
- Introduction of an exemptions for cultivating within 2m of centreline of the hedge – IF establishing a green cover where one doesn't already exist – excludes crops grown for commercial purpose e.g. crop undersown with grass
- Can include hedges around grassland if claimed as EFA Low input grassland or Herb & Legume Rich Pastures

EFA Agro-Forestry including small & farm woodland - rule changes/highlights

- No significant changes on this option
- Includes woodlands that were planted with Scottish Forestry contract under FGS082-01 or FGS082-02 since 1 Jan 2015, or under a woodland creation – small or farm woodland scheme (FGS081-009)

NEW '26 – EFA Low input Grassland

Aim: to create low input grassland which is managed for grazing or cutting

- Must be **on Permanent Grassland** – not Rough Grazing
- Fields should be managed for grazing by carrying out one of the following:
 - Grazing
 - rotational grazing, with rest periods
 - cutting for hay or haylage – with the grass tedded out
 - abide by any management plans on designated sites
- If on SSSIs and priority habitats, graze or cut to maintain the appropriate sward height for the grassland type;
- The grazed pasture should be managed with limited nutrient inputs
- If the area is for cutting, you must leave a minimum of a 3m wide margin uncut to produce flowers and seed
 - margins must be grazed after the grass has set seed
- You can apply Organic Manure and Seaweed but NOT inorganic fertilisers
- You cannot undertake supplementary feeding within 10m of open water or on Species Rich grass
- Guidance requests you try to keep an average sward height of at least 5cm over min. 75% of the grazed pasture during the growing season.

NEW '26 – Herb & legume rich pastures

Aim: to attain & maintain species diversity in existing rotational grass swards by establishing/over/re-seeding with a diverse species grass mix to extend the period of grassland in an arable rotation, building organic matter & minimising cultivations which release Carbon.

- Must be claimed as arable land (inc TGRS in 2025 or later)
- Must ensure there's min. 3 different herbs or legumes from guidance in the mix
- Must include at least 1 legume
- Sward must be maintained until at least 31 December
- The pasture must be in place by 1st July in the year of establishment (doesn't need to be in place from 1st January)
- You can apply organic fertiliser, lime, P & K fertilisers but not Nitrogen or PPP's
- You cannot manage this option on Species Rich or Permanent Grassland
- Where cutting for winter forage, the sward should be cut after herbs/legumes gone to seed;
- Ideally cut in a wildlife friendly manner – best practice guidance only
- **NOTE – GUIDANCE AS AT 4TH JUNE INCORRECTLY STATES CAN BE ON PERMANENT GRASS BUT THIS IS AN ARABLE ONLY OPTION**

NEW '26 – Agro-forestry - low density planting

- Minimum Area 0.5 hectares
- Declared area must have Low density (20 to 50 trees per hectare) / Protected with Cactus guard or similar and or plastic tree guard on Permanent Grassland.
- Or in arable situations trees should be planted in rows, spaced to enable machinery to operate in arable field. Protected with appropriate guards to prevent browsing
- Trees must be native trees, including fruit trees
- Area should be declared as Permanent Crop (PC) on your SAF
- In arable situations you could plant the native trees in strips sown with a wildflower/grass mix
- If you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agro-forestry grant scheme you risk double-funding issues therefore in most cases it would not be advisable.

NEW '26 – Unharvested Crop

Aim: Areas of Unharvested Crop / Conservation headlands can provide an important habitat for farmland biodiversity, contribute to wildlife and ecological networks and benefit water quality

This option:

- Can be around the margin of a field (or on only one side or strip) or splitting two crops within a field
- Must be between 6 and 20 metres wide
- Must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- Must be maintained until at least 31 December in the year of claim
- The unharvested area should be a single species; spring / autumn-sown cereal or oil-seed crop, or a spring sown pea or pulse crop.
- Injurious, invasive and certain other weed species can only be controlled by spot herbicide application or hand rogueing. You must not breach GAEC – refer to the Overview for guidance on GAEC requirements
- You can undersow the unharvested crop with a grass seed mix
- You can apply Phosphate & Potassium fertiliser to maintain soil fertility, however you cannot apply any PPPs from 1 January to 31 December inclusive, except by spot treating weeds

Updates to Permanent Grassland (PGRS):

From 2026, it is no longer a requirement to complete (and retain) an annual nitrogen fertiliser and lime plan for fields of permanent grassland or open grazed woodland

From 2027, businesses may be mandated to perform a range of management activities in an equivalent manner to arable EFA which will reflect industry best practice focused on environmental and climate change benefit.

During the transitional period you should start to prepare now and review opportunities for change that would add benefit to your business and align with this transitional change.

Examples:

- regenerative grazing practices including mob or adaptive grazing
- reducing nitrogen application, low input grassland
- limiting areas of bare soils and poaching, especially next to water courses (GAEC 5), minimising soil disturbance
- wildlife friendly mowing of grassland
- summer grazing of hill ground to create a more diverse vegetation
- retaining TGRS grassland to PGRS to lengthen lengths of leys
- high nature value farming

NOTE: The above is only proposals at this stage. Consultation on future PGRS will be undertaken over the next few months, and we will aim to provide updates as and when we have them.