

Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland

Specification extract · Pages 24–26

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland action (pages 24–26 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 24 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=24

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-conservation-of-cultural-heritage-sites-on-grassland/>

4. The margin must extend from the external outer boundary of the monument. The margin must be established by light cultivation (min-till) techniques – i.e., no ploughing is permitted.
5. Soil cultivation cannot be carried out within the margin once established.
6. The margin must be maintained as grass by mowing or strimming to prevent woody growth for the remainder of the ACRES contract. Mowing is permitted once it does not cause damage to the monument. Extreme care is required here.
7. Plant Protection Products are not permitted on the monument and grass margin except for the spot treatment of noxious and invasive species.
8. Where there is encroaching vegetation (excluding established healthy trees) on/near the monument, this must be controlled but not between March 1st and August 31st annually. Note roots of plants cannot be removed.
9. Grazing by livestock throughout the year is permissible around the monument(s) but care should be taken in the autumn and winter months to ensure no damage is caused to the monument(s). Where there is a risk of damage or poaching, the site can be fenced off with temporary, non-intrusive posts and allowed to recover, before grazing resumes.
10. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional Guidance

- In the case of encroaching Bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting of growing fronds which causes the gradual starvation of the rhizome system. Cutting or thrashing is best done around the middle of June and again six weeks later for at least three successive years.

Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Grassland

Objective

To enhance and maintain visible cultural heritage sites as landscape features and protect their historical value.

Background

All archaeological monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland are marked on maps on the National Monuments Service website and can be found at the following link: [Historic Environment Viewer \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com).

The aim of this option is to protect cultural heritage sites, including archaeological sites, from damage associated with scrub growth, erosion, and poaching.

Any proposed works to a Recorded Monument that involves digging and/or ground disturbance must be notified in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. Under no circumstances should burning take place on or near the monument, as this can cause damage to underlying archaeological deposits.

Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > or = 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- All monuments entered for this action must be located within agricultural parcels claimed by the participant.
- Only sites identified as NMS-Sites and Monuments on the GLAM mapping system are eligible for this action.
- Monuments must be visible on the selected LPIS parcel(s).
- Monuments on commonage parcels are not eligible for this action.
- Other sites of cultural heritage significance, when identified as such in the relevant Local Area Plan, can be applied for as an NPI by the CP teams.
- Where there is more than one monument identified as NMS-Sites and Monuments on the GLAM mapping system at a single location but only one monument is visible, payment is for one NPI at that location only.
- National Monuments in State Care should not be applied for through this action.

Requirements

1. The action must be carried out by managing vegetation on the selected monument by the end of February the year following year of approval or by December the 31st if approved in the final year of the ACRES scheme.
2. The location of the monument(s) selected for this action must be indicated on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each individual monument is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the duration of the ACRES contract.
3. Monuments selected must be visible in the landscape – monuments which have been completely levelled or otherwise removed in the past but are still listed by the NMS as archaeological sites, are not eligible for payment.
4. All works must be done with hand tools (e.g., with a saw, slash hook, secateurs and/or pruning shears) or handheld power tools (e.g., with a chainsaw/brush cutter/trimmer). Tractors or diggers or other machinery cannot be used to cut or remove vegetation.
5. Small trees and plants like Gorse/Furze/Whins, and other individual plants should be removed by cutting at the base.
6. Low hanging branches on larger trees should be pruned to above head height to open access to the site or monument. Pollarding of trees is allowed.
7. Management of vegetation must NOT be carried out between 1st March and 31st August annually. The one exception to this rule is the cutting or thrashing (flailing) of Bracken and ferns which can be carried out when Bracken emerges (May) and six weeks later in the middle of June.
8. Remove dead or unstable trees: Cut as close as possible to ground level, leaving the stump in place. Contact CP team if there is any risk of damage occurring to the monument during the removal of dead or unstable trees.
9. Felled or dead trees must be cut into pieces where they fall and be removed from the monument. These can provide a habitat for invertebrates if left on the ground, but this should not be on the monument.

10. The killing or removal of well-established ivy or trees, whose root systems have invaded the fabric of masonry structure, is not permitted.
11. Plant Protection Products are not permitted, except for spot treatment of scrub, noxious and invasive weeds.
12. Any fallen masonry discovered during work must be left untouched.
13. New shoots of woody plants which become established in the walls of a structure must be removed provided this does not damage or de-stabilise the monument.
14. The interior of masonry monument(s) must be inaccessible to livestock. Ensure that new vegetation does not take hold within the structure, in the absence of grazing. This should not involve any degree of ground disturbance.
15. Grazing by livestock throughout the year is permissible around the monument(s) but care should be taken in the autumn and winter months to ensure no damage is caused to the monument(s). Where there is a risk of damage or poaching the site can be fenced off with temporary, non-intrusive posts and allowed to recover, before grazing resumes.
16. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional Guidance

- This action should be prioritised on monuments where active management is required for their long-term conservation.
- In the case of Bracken, the ideal method is the manual cutting of growing fronds which causes the gradual starvation of the rhizome system. Cutting or bruising is best done around the middle of June and again six weeks later for at least three successive years.
- After woody vegetation has been removed, maintain the visibility of the monument by strimming ground cover within 3m of the exterior of the monument.

Field Margins

Objective

To create a wildlife corridor that can provide habitat for overwintering predatory invertebrates, hunting ground for birds of prey such as Barn Owl and Kestrel, and to help protect water quality from nutrient and sediment run-off.

Background

Severe declines in biodiversity have been well documented for many groups including plants, invertebrates, birds, and mammals due to intensification of agricultural practices. The creation of a rough grassland field margin provides an important habitat which acts as a refuge for wildlife and a corridor to help connect habitats across a landscape. These field margins can also play a role in protecting water quality by reducing nutrient load, intercepting nutrients and sediment runoff, and slowing overland flow.