

4.4 Grassland Management Plan

1. Introduction

Grasslands are a vital component of the landscape, providing ecological, recreational, and aesthetic benefits. Proper management ensures that these habitats support biodiversity, maintain structural integrity, and offer recreational spaces for public use. This plan outlines the management approaches for three types of grasslands:

- Amenity Grassland – Maintained for high-footfall areas with a short, even sward.
- Meadow Grassland – Managed to promote wildflower diversity and provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.
- Tussock Grassland – Left largely unmanaged to support invertebrates, small mammals, and birds by providing dense cover.

Each grassland type has specific maintenance requirements, including mowing, baling, grazing, and invasive species control, to ensure long-term sustainability and ecological value.

2. Amenity Grassland

Objective: Maintain a short, tidy, and visually appealing grass sward for recreational use.

2.1 Establishment & Seeding:

- Use a **native flowering grassland mix** (e.g., *Emorsgate EL1 – Flowering Lawn Mixture*).
- Areas will be **rotovated and raked** to create a fine, firm tilth before sowing.
- Seeding should take place in **autumn or spring** when the soil is moist.

2.2 Maintenance & Cutting:

- Initial Cutting: After germination, mow to 50mm height after 6–8 weeks.
- Regular Cutting:
 - Maintain at 35–40mm height.
 - Cut up to 16 times per year (March–October).
 - Reduce mowing during prolonged dry periods and avoid mowing in very wet conditions.
 - Weed Control: Spot treat persistent weeds manually or with herbicide.
 - Litter and debris removal before mowing to maintain a neat appearance.

2.3 Baling:

- Baling is not required for amenity grassland due to frequent short mowing.
- Grass clippings should be collected and removed to prevent thatch build-up and encourage healthy growth.

3. Meadow Grassland

Objective: Promote species-rich grassland through minimal intervention, seasonal cutting, and effective baling to remove nutrient-rich arisings.

3.1 Establishment & Seeding:

- Seed with a species-rich meadow mix (e.g., British Seed Houses RE1 – Traditional Hay Meadow).
- Undisturbed areas will be enhanced with locally sourced green hay to increase wildflower diversity.
- Seed mix includes:
 - *Centaurea nigra* (Common Knapweed)
 - *Leucanthemum vulgare* (Ox-eye Daisy)
 - *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow Rattle) – reduces grass dominance
 - *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow Oat-Grass)

3.2 Maintenance & Cutting:

- Mowing schedule:
 - Cut twice annually – June/July and late summer (August-September) depending on growth.
 - Leave arisings for 48 hours to allow seeds to disperse before collection.

3.3 Baling:

- Grass arisings will be baled and removed to prevent soil enrichment, which encourages wildflower diversity.
- Bales should be stored in non-sensitive areas, avoiding wetland zones or wildlife corridors.
- If baling is impractical, cut material should be collected and composted off-site.

3.4 Scrub & Weed Control:

- Spot treat invasive weeds (nettles, docks, thistles) if necessary.
- Manually remove encroaching woody vegetation before it dominates the meadow.

3.5 Soil Management:

- No fertiliser applications – maintaining low-nutrient conditions promotes wildflowers.

4. Tussock Grassland

Objective: Maintain dense, structurally diverse sward that supports invertebrates, small mammals, and overwintering species.

4.1 Establishment & Seeding:

- Seed areas using a tussock-forming species mix, such as *British Seed Houses RE1*.
- Seed mix includes:

- *Dactylis glomerata* (Cocksfoot)
- *Festuca pratensis* (Meadow Fescue)
- *Arrhenatherum elatius* (False Oat-Grass)
- *Rhinanthus minor* (Yellow Rattle) – to control dominant grasses.

4.2 Maintenance & Cutting:

- Minimal intervention to allow dense sward formation.
- Cut every 2–3 years (October–February) on a rotational basis.
- Cutting should never remove more than half the area in one year.

4.3 Baling:

- Baling is not required for tussock grassland, as arisings provide valuable thatch and microhabitats.
- Arisings will be left in situ to support invertebrates, small mammals, and shelter for amphibians.

4.4 Weed & Scrub Control:

- Spot treat perennial weeds using herbicide or manual removal.
- Monitor and control bramble or scrub encroachment by cutting back when necessary.

4.5 Harrowing or Scarification:

- Late autumn harrowing (every 3–5 years) to break up thatch and rejuvenate sward.

5. Monitor & Review

- Informal visual inspections regular basis
- Annual visual inspections of all grassland areas.
- Adjust cutting and baling schedules based on biodiversity monitoring and vegetation response.
- Formal review every 5 years to refine management strategies.
- Regular litter removal and general site maintenance to ensure a clean and well-maintained landscape.

6. Conclusion

This management plan ensures the effective maintenance of different grassland types while promoting biodiversity and sustainable land use. Regular monitoring and adaptive management strategies will be implemented to maintain ecological integrity and meet land use objectives.