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| **Option Name:** | **Creation of riparian buffer – 10 metre width - ungrazed** |
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| **Option Code:** | **RBW** |
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| **Option Payment:#** | Year 1: | £8.17 per m |
| Year 2 – 5: | £0.36 per m each year |
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| **Option Aim(s):** | This Option will protect watercourses from sedimentation and diffuse pollution. It will also encourage the development of waterside vegetation that will stabilise the banks and enhance biodiversity.  |
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| **Scheme Applicability:** | Wider – EFS(W) | **✓** | Higher – EFS(H) | **✓** | Group – EFS(G) | **✓** |
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| **This option is made up of:** | Annual Management requirements | **✓** | NPI (capital items) | **✓** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **This option is:** | Permanent | **✓** | Rotational |  |  |
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| **Option Description and Outcome:** | This Option is a combination of essential non-productive investments (referred to as capital works) to establish the Option with a range of recurring annual management requirements to ensure successful establishment, retention and maintenance of the Option. Payment for the essential capital works is included in the Option payment rate. For EFS(H) sites the **‘**Creation of riparian buffers – 10 metre width - ungrazed’ Option is eligible where it will maintain and enhance the water quality and biodiversity value of these sites and is included in the site specific Remedial Management Plan (ssRMP). A stock-proof fence is erected 10 metres on average from the top of the bank of a watercourse. A watercourse is defined as a ‘dry sheugh, wet sheugh, stream, river, lake or waterway which is at least one metre wide on average’ and a ‘riparian buffer’ refers to the area along a watercourse and standing waters, such as lakes or ponds.‎ The vegetation in the two metres width next to the watercourse is left uncut throughout the agreement. The vegetation in the eight metre width next to the field is cut after 15th July each year. The cut vegetation is removed. |
| **Choice of site:** | This Option is suitable for grazed grassland fields adjacent to designated and undesignated watercourses. It is particularly suitable where there is poaching of the bank and where there is little or no riparian vegetation present. |
| **Essential capital works:** | Creating the ‘Creation of riparian buffer – 10 metre width – ungrazed’ by erecting a protective fence and access gate(s) and gate posts is considered as essential capital works.  |

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| **Additional optional capital works available for this Option:** | Gate and two gate posts – stock-proof fenceDrinking troughDrinking trough baseDrinking trough pipe work – not available for Tranche 7 agreements starting 01 January 2024Pasture pump and associated pipe work |
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| **Length Permitted:** | **Minimum** | 10m | **Maximum** | As per maximum Agreement value\* |

\* DAERA reserves the right to limit a Higher Level agreement value where it considers appropriate to ensure value for money.

**Requirements and Controls:**

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| **Code** | **Non-productive investment requirements (capital works)** | **Control type(1)** |
| **Admin** | **CwRS** | **OTSC** |
| **RBW1C** | Complete all capital works required (erection of protective fence and access gate(s) and gateposts) by 1st June in the first year of the EFS agreement. | **✓** |  | **✓** |
| **RBW2C** | Create the claimed area of ‘Creation of riparian buffer – 10 metre width – ungrazed’ in the correct location in the field(s) where the Option has been approved. The watercourse must be within the boundary or touching the boundary of the field in which the RBW has been claimed. The entire length of the watercourse along one field boundary must be fenced. Internal watercourses (not along a field boundary) must be fenced on both sides |  | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW3C** | An average of 10 square metres per one metre length of riparian buffer must be established. |  | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW4C** | Erect the claimed length of riparian buffer protective fence to the standard given in the Specification below on the field side of the riparian buffer. | **✓** | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW5C** | Install a minimum of one 4.27 metre gate and two gateposts to the standard given in the Specification below for each 150 metre (or part 150 metre) linear length of protective fence. |  | **✓** | **✓** |

The possible control types for each requirement may be:

Admin’ – administrative checks, ‘CwRS’ – Control with Remote Sensing, ‘OTSC’ – On-the-Spot Check.

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| **Code** | **Annual management requirements**  | **Control type(1)** |
| **Admin** | **CwRS** | **OTSC** |
| **RBW1M** | Retain and manage the same area and location of ‘Creation of riparian buffer – 10 metre width – ungrazed’ for the duration of the EFS agreement. Under this option, farmers will be paid for a period of 5 years and must retain the buffer for an additional period of 10 years. Farmers can claim the Basic Payment Scheme for the length of the commitment (inclusive of the retention period) if Single Farm Payment was claimed and paid on the land in 2008. |  | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW2M** | Maintain the riparian buffer protective fence and access gate(s) and gateposts in a stock-proof condition for the duration of the EFS agreement. |  | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW3M** | Do not cut or graze the vegetation in the two metre width next to the watercourse during the EFS agreement. |  | **✓** | **✓** |
| **RBW4M** | Cut the vegetation in the eight metre width next to the field after 15th July each year and remove the cuttings. | **✓** |  | **✓** |
| **RBW5M** | The riparian buffer must not be grazed.  |  |  | **✓** |
| **RBW6M** | No fertilisers (organic or inorganic) may be used. | **✓** |  | **✓** |
| **RBW7M** | The ‘Creation of riparian buffers – 10 metre width – ungrazed’ Option must be established, retained and managed as detailed in the ssRMP for EFS(H) sites. | **✓** |  | **✓** |
| **RBW8M** | Field records detailing area established, location, date established and all Management Requirements including Integrated Pest management (IPM). | **✓** |  | **✓** |

The possible control types for each requirement may be:

 ‘Admin’ – administrative checks, ‘CwRS’ – Control with Remote Sensing, ‘OTSC’ – On-the-Spot Check

**Specification for ‘Stock-proof fencing’:**

* All remnant fence material must be removed before erecting the ‘Stock- proof fencing’.
* New materials must be used for ‘Stock-proof fencing’.
* The fence must be erected to BS 1722-2:2006.
* The minimum standard for ‘Stock-proof fencing’ is galvanised woven wire and three strands line wire **or** five strands line wire.
* The overall height of the fence must be at least 1.20 m from the ground to the top wire.
* Straining posts must be equivalent in strength and durability to 125 mm top diameter round timber or 125 mm x 125 mm sawn timbers.
* Straining posts must be set at centres not exceeding 150 m or at each change in direction or gradient.
* Struts must be equivalent in strength and durability to 75 mm top diameter round timber or 75 mm x 75 mm sawn timber.
* Struts must be mortised into the straining post.
* Intermediate posts must be equivalent in strength and durability to 75 mm top diameter round timber or 75 mm x 75 mm sawn timber and set at centres not exceeding 3.00 m.
* Intermediate wooden posts must be at least 1.83 m long.
* All posts must be free of bark.
* Posts must have a potential minimum 15 year life, clearly indicated on manufacturer’s literature/invoice or on application of a subsequent treatment again clearly indicated on manufacturer’s literature/invoice. Where wooden posts have been treated with a preservative, this must have been applied by the manufacturer.
* Use strands of galvanised 4 mm mild plain steel wire or 2.5 mm barbed wire.
* The ‘Stock-proof fencing’ must be properly strained and secured to posts with galvanised staples or appropriate fastenings (such as galvanised wire or bespoke fasteners).
* ‘Stock-proof fencing’ must be erected as detailed in the ssRMP, for EFS(H) sites.

**Specification for ‘Gate and two gate posts’:**

* new materials must be used;
* the claimed number of ‘Gate and two gate posts - stock-proof fence’ must be erected in the correct location in the field(s) where it has been approved;
* the gate, gate posts and gate hangers must be galvanised to the relevant British Standard;
* the minimum standard for a gate is a 6 bar gate with bracing. Gates must be soundly framed and constructed with steel piping or rectangular hollow section or similar metal;
* the overall height of the gate must be at least 1.10 m from the bottom of the bottom rail to the top of the top rail;
* the minimum width of the gate opening must be 4.27 m;
* gate hanging and closing posts must be at least 114 mm diameter x 3 mm thick steel piping or similar metal;
* gate hanging and closing posts must be set in concrete;
* the gate must be fitted with all fittings needed for its operation and be hung in a satisfactory manner;
* the gate must not open outwards on to a public road; and
* ‘Gate and two gate posts - stock-proof fence’ must be erected and maintained as detailed in the ssRMP, for EFS(H) sites.

**Further Advice**

A watercourse is defined as a ‘dry sheugh, wet sheugh, stream, river, lake or waterway which is at least one metre wide on average’ and a ‘riparian buffer’ refers to the area along a watercourse and standing waters, such as lakes or ponds.‎

Avoid locations where river or sheugh banks are likely to be undermined by erosion from the watercourse. Avoid soil compaction as this would reduce the efficiency of the riparian buffer at trapping pollutants. Do not cut the eight metre strip next to the field when ground conditions are wet. Maintaining grass cover over the winter and spring is especially important – this is when surface run-off is likely to be highest.

Approved herbicides/pesticides may only be applied to the area of the riparian buffer if justified as part of the implementation of IPM, including for the control of noxious weeds or invasive species by spot spraying of an approved herbicide.

Approval should be sought from DFI Transport NI before new gates and gate posts, fencing are erected along a roadway.

The steel piping or rectangular hollow section or similar metal of the gate should be at least 1.50 mm thick.

For stock-proof fencing, straining posts should be at least 2.10 m long when not set in concrete and at least 1.87 m long when set in concrete. Struts should be set at least 450 mm into the ground. To allow for future adjustments and to prevent damage to the galvanising, staples should be driven in at an angle, but not fully home. Do not attach the ‘Stock-proof fencing’ to trees, hedgerows or electricity poles and do not block or restrict rights of way.

If you intend to complete this option on a march boundary you should ensure that you have fully discussed and agreed that you can carry out the option requirements and controls on the march boundary with the person who has control of the neighbouring land.

Do not use the riparian buffer for vehicular access except for necessary watercourse and riparian buffer strip maintenance.

Employ good soil management in the adjacent field. This will reduce the run-off pressure on the buffer strip, improve and prolong its effectiveness, and reduce the costs of managing and repairing it.

In general, anything which reduces the length of uninterrupted slope along the field to the watercourse will help reduce run-off. For example, establishing a hedge parallel to the buffer strip, or along the field side of the strip itself, would enhance its effectiveness as a buffer. Similarly establishing a hedge or shelterbelt of woodland in the sloping fields running towards the riparian buffer will reduce the run-off reaching it.

Avoid placing spoil from the watercourse on the riparian buffer.

**Figure 1. Creation of riparian buffer – 10 metre width – ungrazed**

*(Diagram not to scale.)*

The 10 metre riparian strip must not be grazed.

An access gate (min. width 4.27 m) must be provided every 150 m, or part thereof.

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