

Option Name: Follow-up rush control

Option Code: RFC

Option Payment: Year 2 - 5: £35.00 per ha per year

Option Aim(s): To decrease the cover of invasive rush on priority habitats in designated sites, thereby enhancing their biodiversity and landscape value.

Scheme Applicability: Wider – EFS(W) Higher – EFS(H) Group – EFS(G)

This option is made up of: Annual Management requirements NPI (capital items)

This option is: Permanent Rotational

Option Description and Outcome: This is an annual management Option and does not contain essential non - productive investments (referred to as capital works). The Option will aim to control rushes on priority habitats in semi - natural sites by cutting during the growing season. This will allow low growing plants to flourish and encourage more insects and birds. Rush management is also a key issue in the successful management of breeding wader sites.

Choice of site: 'Follow-up rush control' may only be carried out in EFS(H) and EFS(G) on land in semi - natural habitats, where a requirement has been identified. The need for 'Follow - up rush control' will be specified in the site specific Remedial Management Plan (ssRMP). The area and location of 'Follow - up rush control' will be clearly detailed on the ssRMP map.

Essential capital works: None

Additional optional capital works available for this Option: None

Area Permitted: **Minimum** 0.01 ha **Maximum** Not Applicable*

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

Requirements and Controls:

Code	Annual management requirements	Control type ¹		
		Admin	CwRS	OTSC
RFC1M	Complete all 'Follow-up rush control' as detailed in the site specific Remedial Management Plan each year in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the EFS(H) or EFS(G) agreement.			✓
RFC2M	Complete the claimed area of 'Follow-up rush control' in the field(s) where the works have been approved by cutting, between 15 th July and 15 th March.	✓		✓
RFC3M	Keep field records as required in the site specific Remedial Management Plan.	✓		✓

¹ The possible control types for each requirement may be:

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

Further Advice:

Observe all relevant Health and Safety guidelines when operating machinery or using hand tools when completing works under this Option. Work should not be carried out when ground conditions are wet in order to minimise damage to the site.

Rushes should be cut close to the ground, i.e. less than 20 centimetres from ground level, where this does not constitute a Health and Safety risk.

The best time for control is early to mid - summer when growth rate of soft rush is highest. Grazing or heavy rolling of the area after cutting will help to reduce regrowth of the rushes.

Avoid creating wheel ruts as this can damage the soil structure and the sward and encourage the establishment of invasive weeds.

Avoid overgrazing and poaching because it damages soil structure and the sward and creates conditions for seedlings to grow.

Cut rushes should ideally be removed by baling, raking or burning. Where this is not possible, graze with cattle immediately after cutting to help break up the mat of cut rush. Burning waste plant material requires an exemption under the Waste Management (NI) Regulations 2006.