

4.1 Fen, Swamp and Reedbeds

Definition: wetlands have a naturally high watertable. They are usually flooded for part of the year and remain wet until at least the middle of June. Wetlands consist of fen, swamp and reedbed habitats.

Fens are peaty wetlands, which are so wet or waterlogged all year that they can only be occasionally grazed, and then late in the season. Fen vegetation consists of a mixture of sedges, mosses, rushes and flowering plants such as devils-bit scabious, marsh cinquefoil and orchids. Swamp and reedbed vegetation is dominated by common reed, bullrush, tall sedges or rushes. They are often found in shallow water around lakes and rivers. Reedbeds are periodically flooded, whereas the vegetation of a swamp is permanently flooded.

Aims: to provide suitable habitat for associated wetland wildlife by the implementation of appropriate agricultural practices

Biodiversity objectives: this option contributes to the Biodiversity Action Plan targets for Curlew, Lapwing, Blue-eyed grass, Marsh Fritillary butterfly, Lowland meadows, Fens and Reedbeds. Some NI Priority species such as Irish lady's tresses orchid, Reed bunting and Redshank will also benefit.

Management requirements

- No grazing is permitted from 1 January - 31 May.
- Between 1 June to 31 December the stocking density must not exceed 0.075 LU/ha at any time.
- No cultivation, reclamation, infilling, dumping, fertilisation, drainage or application of slurry, farmyard manure, lime, herbicide, pesticide, sheep dip or any other material is permitted.
- Supplementary feeding sites, temporary silage clamps and the storage of big bale silage or hay are not permitted.
- The spread of scrub/trees must be controlled.
- Trees must not be planted on fen, swamp or reedbeds.

Further advice

Grant aid for alternative drinking sites, to reduce poaching and trampling damage, may be available under the Essential Enhancement Plan. The annual payment includes an element for routine positive management such as scrub control (see Appendix IV) and reed cutting each year.

Water levels in sheughs and open drains should be maintained as close as possible to bank height during the period 1 March and 15 June, to create soft ground, which improves feeding areas for snipe and curlew.

Management plans are provided for
participants in the
**Environmentally Sensitive Areas and
Countryside Management Schemes**

