

Guides to Bringing a Croft into Production



**Farm
Advisory
Service**

Biodiversity Benefits

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Liming and fertilising derelict land can lead to improvements to soil biodiversity, which can benefit other wildlife such as wading birds that feed on earthworms and other soil invertebrates. However, it is important to protect existing habitats of conservation interest such as heathland, wetlands and species-rich grassland which can be damaged by fertiliser and lime applications or drainage works. It may be useful to get an environmental survey of the farm to identify existing important habitats and features and identify additional measures that could benefit biodiversity alongside productive farming.

Some examples of these are shown below. Grant aid through environmental schemes may be available in future to support some of these, although such schemes are currently not accepting new applications.

Hedges - wildlife and shelter

By planning hedges wildlife can find food and shelter. It will attract:

- Birds – Nesting sites and winter food from the berries produced in some species
- Bees – Can harvest nectar and pollen from the flowers
- Butterflies – Can drink nectar from the flowers

These plantings can also provide:

- Shelter for livestock
- Distance between your livestock and neighbouring livestock if on a boundary. This increases biosecurity
- Provide privacy on your croft
- Make use of unused tracks already fenced off

There may also be access to grant assistance for planting hedges under CAGS.



Watercourses - water quality and animal safety

Depending on what types of watercourses are on your croft and the livestock you introduce, livestock introduction may have a dramatic impact on them. By fencing a watercourse off to prevent animal access you will:

- Protect the banks and reduce soil erosion
- Reduced diffuse pollution
- Provide cover and food for birds and small mammals
- Allow flowers for pollinating insects
- Protect animals from being trapped in the watercourse, for example small lambs



Wet areas - wetland and fluke

If you have small areas of fields or whole fields which are wetlands, you can manage them to the benefit of wildlife and also your own livestock.

Wetland areas are where the soil is saturated at the surface, either permanently or seasonally. Wetlands range from small basin fens to extensive floodplain marshes.

You may manage a whole field by restricting grazing or by cutting, whilst a small area of a field may be fenced off with in some cases no grazing.

If managed, these wetland areas can:

- Provide a home for a wide range of birds, insects and plants
- Help to moderate floods
- Provide material for thatching and grazing
- Improve management in livestock if wet areas are fenced off

These are just a few of the things you can do on your croft, which will not only improve biodiversity but also improve your management of the croft at the same time.

