

Conservation of Farmland Habitats

Conservation and protection of farmland wildlife and habitats is an important dimension of environmental sustainability.

In order of priority, decisions about the management of wildlife habitats should aim to:

- Retain
- Enhance
- Create



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Prioritised Guidance for Management of Farmland Wildlife Habitats



Retain what you have

Retain existing wildlife areas. These habitats have highest value for farmland wildlife e.g. native woodlands, ponds, wetlands, species-rich grasslands, marshland, as well as hedgerows and field margins. Old buildings can be important roosts for birds and bats.



Enhance degraded farmland habitats through improved management

Increase the quality of existing farmland habitats to improve the wildlife value of a farm. Native grasslands and heathland areas can be improved through appropriate grazing. Control invasive species. Allow hedgerows to grow tall (for farmland birds) and flower (for pollinators). Prevent spray drift onto field margins, hedgerows, ponds, wetlands and waterways.



Only consider habitat creation after existing habitats have been retained or enhanced

Newly created habitats usually have a lower wildlife value than existing habitats. However, in areas with very little existing habitats, the creation of farmland habitats can help e.g. new hedgerows, field margins, pollinator strips, native woodland, wildbird seed mixes etc.



Do not locate new wildlife habitats on existing habitats

Placing newly created habitats (e.g. pollinator strips, wild bird cover, woodland) on existing habitats (species-rich grasslands, heathland) typically results in a net loss of biodiversity.