

# Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) – Universal Layer

## Verifiable Standards 2026

*Verifiable standards for classifying breaches of:*

### **Universal Code and Universal Actions**



This document should be used in conjunction with the Sanctions Matrix to define the Severity, Extent and Permanence of penalties and the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026  
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**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

## **Consents and Legal Requirements**

### **Consent and Legal Requirements**

You must ensure all consents, licences and permissions have been granted where required.

You must ensure you comply with all your legal requirements regarding the environment, hygiene, animal welfare and all relevant health and safety standards.

<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence that the claimant is not complying with all the relevant legal requirements and all necessary consents were not obtained where required.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

## **Universal Code**

The Universal Code is a set of non-regulatory requirements which all claimants participating in the SFS - Universal Layer must follow.

You will be expected to meet the requirements of the Universal Code for the full 12 months of the scheme year.

The Universal Code is made up of four parts:

1. Soil protection
2. Biodiversity and habitats, including 10% habitat on your farm
3. Trees
4. Landscape features

# Universal Code – Soil Protection

## Soil Protection

The aim of these requirements is to protect soil and surface water against the consequences of erosion and runoff, including after harvest or grazing.

### **Requirements:**

Comply with the requirements for Soil Protection, set out in Section H3 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Failure to maintain a minimum soil cover (e.g. crops, stubbles, residues or other vegetation).	<b>Low</b> - less than 2ha of relevant fields	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>
	<b>Medium</b> - more than 2ha of relevant fields.		<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that maize has been grown on land with a slope of more than 12 degrees.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that maize has been grown on land liable to flooding and has not been under sown in accordance with the requirements.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that mechanical field operations and or vehicle activity has taken place on waterlogged soils and no exemptions apply.	<b>Low</b> - an operation/activity within any one parcel.  <b>Medium</b> - there is evidence of more than one operation/activity on any given parcel or one operation/activity within a Designated Site (catchment of lake Designated Site or within 100m buffer of the boundary of a river or water dependent Designated Site)	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of soil run off down slope off site (field) or into watercourses and roads.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

Evidence of supplementary feeding within 10 metres of surface water.	<p><b>Low</b> - feeder with potential to cause pollution.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - feeding practice causes pollution and/or bank erosion.</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b> (where evidence of pollution and/or bank erosion).
Failure to complete an accurate rough surface soil risk assessment and/or notify Welsh Government on or before the day the land is cultivated to leave a rough surface.	<p><b>Low</b> - where no soil risk assessment is completed and/or submitted and no evidence of soil erosion is found.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - where a soil risk assessment is completed, but evidence of soil erosion is found.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - where no soil risk assessment has been completed and evidence of soil erosion is found.</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b> (where there's evidence of soil erosion).
		<b>Extent 1</b>	
		<b>Extent 2</b>	
Cultivation or ploughing has taken place within 1 metre of surface waters.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that Plant Protection Products have been applied within 2 metres of surface water.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

# Universal Code – Biodiversity and Habitats

## Biodiversity and Habitats

The aim of these requirements is to prevent loss and damage of existing semi-natural habitats, and to support their enhancement.

**All habitat is defined as:** Any vegetation which has a composition of less than 25% sown agricultural species as per the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) (EIA) Regulations 2017, or land mapped as newly created habitats on improved land as part of UA5: Habitat maintenance.

### 10% Habitat Requirement

It is a Universal Code requirement for at least 10% of each farm to be actively managed as habitat to benefit biodiversity alongside food production.

A list of eligible land and landscape features used to determine the 10% habitat requirement is set out in Section I of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

### Activity Diary

There are certain activities permissible in the Universal Code where you should keep a record in an activity diary. Specific details are set out in the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Your activity diary can either be in an electronic or paper format and you should keep it on farm for at least 5 years and make it available at inspection if requested.

### Requirements:

Comply with the requirements for Biodiversity and Habitats, set out in Section H4 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence of a shortfall in the % of habitat found.	<p><b>Low</b> - Between 9% and 10% habitat found</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - less than 9% habitat found</p>	Extent 2	Rectifiable Permanent
An up-to-date completed activity diary is not available for inspection.	<p><b>Low</b> - Records available but incomplete.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - No records made available on request.</p>	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that habitat land has been damaged i.e. overgrazed, undergrazed, poaching, rutting by farm machinery or other vehicles or felling of trees.	<p><b>Low</b> - Where damage is less than or equal to 0.10ha.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is greater than 0.10ha but less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Greater than 1ha</p>	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that habitat land has been agriculturally improved.	<p><b>Low</b> - Where damage is less than or equal to 0.10ha.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is greater than 0.10ha but less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Greater than 1ha</p>	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent

<p>Evidence that habitat has been ploughed or cultivated or re-seeded.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence that one or more of the following activities have been carried out on a Designated Site without consent from NRW;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergrazing or over-grazing</li> <li>• Poaching</li> <li>• Rutting by farm machinery or other vehicles</li> <li>• Felling of trees</li> <li>• Habitat land has been agriculturally improved</li> <li>• Habitat land has been ploughed, cultivated or re-seeded</li> <li>• Harrowing or rolling on habitat land between 15 March and 15 July</li> <li>• Earth moving activities on habitat land including cutting peat and/or infilling natural hollows</li> <li>• Extracting rock, scree, sand, shingle, gravel, clay or peat from habitat land or rivers</li> <li>• Constructing new tracks, roads, yards, hardstanding or any new structures on habitat land</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium</b> – Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of new drainage or modification of existing drainage on habitat land or within 100m of a wetland habitat where the ditch or drain would intercept water running to the wetland</li> <li>• Storage of materials, vehicles, trailers or machinery</li> <li>• Storage of manure, silage, or other farm wastes and any hazardous or non-hazardous substances on habitat land.</li> <li>• Burning of vegetation, grassland or any cut material on habitat land</li> <li>• Application of organic manures, slurry, digestate, sewerage sludge, wastepaper sludge, other off and on-farm wastes, manufactured fertilisers, basic slag, calcified seaweed, and any hazardous or non-hazardous substances (including sheep-dip) on habitat land</li> <li>• Application of lime on habitat land</li> <li>• Application of plant protection products on habitat land</li> </ul>			
<p>Evidence of installation of new drainage or modification of existing drainage on habitat land or within 100m of a wetland habitat where the ditch or drain would intercept water running to the wetland on a Designated Site or impacting on a Designated Site without consent from NRW.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - Up to and including 50m.  <b>High</b> - Greater than 50m</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

<p>Evidence that harrowing or rolling has been carried out on habitat land between 15 March and 15 July.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Carried out during the closed period, where no evidence of damage to flora/fauna.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Carried out during closed period and evidence of damage to flora/fauna.</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b> (if evidence of damage to flora/fauna)</p>
<p>Evidence of earth moving activities on habitat land, including cutting peat and/or infilling natural hollows.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence that rock, scree, sand, shingle, gravel, clay or peat has been extracted from habitat land or rivers.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of construction of new track, road, yard, hardstanding or any new structures on habitat land without prior permission from Welsh Government or a Natural Resources Wales agreement.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<p><b>Measurable</b></p>	<p><b>Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence that ditches have been cleared between 1 March and 31 August on habitat land.</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of ditch clearance within the boundary of a designated site without consent from NRW</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>

<p>Evidence of installation of new drainage or modification of existing drainage on habitat land or within 100m of a wetland habitat where the ditch or drain would intercept water running to the wetland.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Less than or equal to 10m.  <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 10m, up to and including 50m.  <b>High</b> - Greater than 50m</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
<p>Evidence of storage of materials, vehicles, trailers or machinery.</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
<p>Evidence that manure, silage or other farm wastes and any hazardous or non-hazardous substances have been stored on habitat land.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b>  <b>High</b> - if evidence of run off.</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent (if evidence of run off or pollution).</b>
<p>Evidence that vegetation, grassland or any cut material has been burnt on habitat land, except as part of a Heather &amp; Grass Burning Regulation and Code (2008) compliant Burning Management Plan (BMP).</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.  <b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
<p>Evidence of the application of organic manures i.e livestock manures (except where permitted by a specific SFS Universal or Optional habitat action), slurry, digestate, sewage sludge, waste-paper sludge, other off and on-farm wastes, manufactured fertilisers, basic slag, calcified</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha.  <b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

seaweed, and any hazardous or non-hazardous substances (including sheep-dip) on habitat land.	<b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.		
Evidence of the application of lime on habitat land, except where permitted by a specific SFS Universal or Optional habitat action.	<b>Low</b> - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha. <b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha. <b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of use of plant protection products on habitat land.	<b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha. <b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of supplementary feeding on habitat land without the relevant exemptions.	<b>Low</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding but no damage. <b>Medium</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding and damage to habitat land e.g. poaching or nitrification of soil. <b>High</b> - Unsuitable supplementary feeding where there is damage to habitat land which cannot be restored to its original condition by the end of the growing season.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

<p>Evidence of supplementary feeding on or next to archaeological sites, steep slopes, Public Rights of Way, or within 10 metres from any watercourse.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding but no damage.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding and damage e.g. poaching nitrification of soil, impacted a Public Right of Way, or near watercourse but no evidence of run-off to watercourse.</p> <p><b>High</b> - If damage caused to archaeological sites or evidence of run-off to watercourse.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence plastic wrap has not been removed from the land once feed has been dispensed.</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence trees have been planted without prior approval from Welsh Government.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - up to and including 0.10ha</p> <p><b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b> (if trees are established or habitat damaged).</p>

## Universal Code – Trees

### Trees

This part applies to individual trees, or groups of trees under 0.1ha. For areas of tree canopy cover and woodland over 0.1 ha see UA9: Woodland Maintenance

### **Requirements:**

Comply with the requirements for Trees, set out in Section H5 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence of damage to trees from livestock and/or machinery.	<b>Low</b> - Up to and including 5 trees. <b>Medium</b> - More than 5 trees.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that existing mature, ancient or veteran tree(s) and/or trees planted as a demonstration of progress towards the delivery of the tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan have been felled where no exemption applies.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1:</b> 1-5 trees. <b>Extent 2:</b> over 5 trees	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that all deadwood whether standing or fallen (except for all species of spruce) has not been retained.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that pruning or lopping has not been undertaken appropriately with a clean cut.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

<p>Evidence organic manures (as defined under Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations) e.g. livestock manures, slurry, digestate, sewage sludge, waste-paper sludge, other off and on-farm wastes, manufactured fertilisers, basic slag, calcified seaweed, and any hazardous or non-hazardous substances (including sheep-dip) has been applied.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Up to and including 5 trees. <b>Medium</b> - More than 5 trees.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of lime applied under the tree crown/canopy.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Up to and including 5 trees. <b>Medium</b> - More than 5 trees.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence Plant Protection Products have been sprayed or allowed to drift under the tree crown/canopy.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Up to and including 5 trees. <b>Medium</b> - More than 5 trees.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of ploughing and/or rolling has been carried out under the tree crown or canopy of in-field trees.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Up to and including 5 trees. <b>Medium</b> - More than 5 trees.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of trees planted within 5m from edge of tree canopy.</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of supplementary feeding beneath a veteran tree canopy or within 5m .</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding but no damage. <b>Medium</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding and damage e.g. poaching nitrification of soil.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>

	<b>High</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding where there is damage which cannot be restored to its original condition by the end of the growing season.		
Evidence of storage of machinery or materials beneath in-field veteran trees.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of trees being cut or trimmed during the bird nesting season – between 1 March and 31 August without the relevant exemptions.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## Universal Code – Landscape Features

### Landscape Features

The aim of these requirements is to maintain and retain historic and landscape features, which are important features in our cultural and physical landscape.

### **Requirements:**

Comply with the requirements for Landscape Features, set out in Section H6 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that external enclosed farm boundaries which the customer is responsible for are not stockproof.	<b>Low</b> - if confined to one parcel.  <b>Medium</b> - where multiple parcels are not stockproof.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that landscape features such as stone walls, stone-faced earth banks, hedges, earth banks and slate fences have been destroyed or have not been retained without written planning or development consent from the relevant authority.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of damage to traditional boundary features.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence traditional boundary features have not been maintained.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that all stone stiles, sheep creeps, culverts or other traditional features have not been retained.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>

Evidence that rubbish, litter, bale wrappings, derelict machinery and equipment have not been cleared.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of organic or inorganic fertiliser, pesticides or herbicides, spreading (or drift) within 1m from the edge of a hedge.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that soil or other fine material has been used to fill in gaps between stone faces in the middle of a dry-stone wall.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of wedges being used to secure larger stones on the face of a stone wall.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that manure, silage or other farm wastes or any hazardous or non-hazardous substances have been stored on a landscape or archaeological feature.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of cultivation within 1m of a hedge, stone wall or earth bank.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence hedgerows have been cut or trimmed during the bird nesting season, (1 March to 31 August).	<b>Medium.</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence the farmer has not retained pond(s) on the holding (e.g. by drainage, filling in) or has filled in or drained part of a pond(s).	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA1) – SOIL HEALTH

### Requirements:

Comply with all requirements for UA1 Soil Health, listed in Section J1 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the minimum of 20% Soil testing (on average) of parcels containing improved land has not been achieved by 31 December 2026.	<b>Low</b> - soil testing carried out but minimum cumulative requirement of 20% a year has not been met.  <b>Medium</b> - Where no testing has been undertaken in a scheme year and minimum cumulative requirement has not been achieved.	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that the minimum range of testing (Potassium (K), Phosphorous (P), Magnesium (Mg), Potential Hydrogen (pH), and Soil Organic Matter (SOM) has not been carried out.	<b>Low</b>	Extent 1	Rectifiable  Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	Extent 1	Rectifiable  Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard and/or SAF declaration is false.  <i>An example of this could be where soil testing has been confirmed as complete but later found not to be completed.</i>	<b>High</b>	Extent 1	Permanent

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA2) – INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)

### Requirements:

Comply with all requirements for UA2 Integrated Pest Managements (IPM), listed in Section J2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence IPM plan has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.  <i>An example of this could be where the IPM plan has been confirmed as complete but later found not to be completed.</i>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA3) – BENCHMARKING

### Requirements:

Comply with all requirements for UA3 Benchmarking, listed in Section J3 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence the minimum benchmarking has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	<b>Low</b> - Partial completion of KPI's  <b>Medium</b> - No assessments of KPI's carried out	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.  <i>An example of this could be where benchmarking has been confirmed as complete but later found not to be completed.</i>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA4) – CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

### Requirements:

Comply with the requirements for UA4 Continuous Professional Development, listed in Section J4 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence the minimum CPD has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	<b>Low</b> - Less than 6 hours of training completed.  <b>Medium</b> - No training completed.	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that the Health and Safety training element has not been completed.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  Permanent
Evidence that the external training completed did not meet requirements	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable  Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.  <i>An example of this could be where CPD has been confirmed as complete but later found not to be completed.</i>	High	Extent 1	Permanent

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA5) – HABITAT MAINTENANCE

### Habitat Maintenance

The aim of this action is to retain and maintain important semi-natural, or newly created, permanent habitats on your farm to benefit grazing livestock and the natural environment.

Semi-natural habitat for the purposes of this Universal Action is defined as any vegetation which has a composition of less than 25% sown agricultural species as per the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) (EIA) Regulations 2017, or newly created habitats as confirmed on the Habitat Baseline Review on the SAF 2026.

#### **Requirements:**

Comply with the detailed requirements of the broad habitat classifications, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

You must meet these requirements and those of the Universal Code (Part 2 – Biodiversity and Habitat).

There are certain activities which you should keep a record of in an activity diary. You are also required to keep a stocking diary if you have Upland open habitats. These records should be kept on farm for at least 5 years.

**Please note that many requirements under UA5 apply universally to all habitat land. Any breaches of these requirements will be applied under the Universal Code.**

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## 1. Coastal Saltmarsh

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of the construction of simple bridges to allow creek crossing within a Designated Site without consent from NRW.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that creeks, pans or hollows have been modified or interfered with.	<b>Medium</b> - Less than or equal to 1ha. <b>High</b> - Greater than 1ha.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that rushes have been cut between 15 March and 15 July.	<b>Low</b> - Where less than or equal to 1ha has been cut or topped.  <b>Medium</b> - Where more than 1ha has been cut or topped.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that more than 30% of rushes or undesirable vegetation species have been cut or topped in any one year.	<b>Low</b> - 30% - 50% cut or topped.  <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 50% cut or topped	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

## 2. Coastal Sand Dune and Shingle Beach

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that shingle beach has been grazed.	<b>Low</b> - Evidence of grazing but no damage caused to the habitat.  If damaged the breach should be applied under Universal Code.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>
Evidence that trees or shrubs have been planted.	<b>Medium</b> - up to and including 0.10ha.  <b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b> (if trees are established or habitat damaged).
Evidence of more than 30% rushes or other undesirable vegetation species being cut or topped.	<b>Low</b> - 30 - 50% cut or topped.  <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 50% cut or topped.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that scrub has been allowed to spread.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that rabbits are being controlled or of attempted control within sand dunes and shingle beaches.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that sand or any other aggregate material has been removed from sand dunes or shingle.	<b>High</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence of dune remobilisation work (including re-profiling).	<b>High</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that shingle structure / ridges have been re-profiled.	<b>High</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of use or permitting vehicles or craft for sporting or recreational activities.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of creation of sea defences or coast protection works without prior approval from the relevant competent authority.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 2</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

### 3. Lowland and Coastal Heath

#### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence heather, bell-heather, cross-leaved heath or western gorse has not been maintained to make up 25% of ground cover.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that trees have been planted.	<b>Medium</b> - up to and including 0.10ha. <b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b> (if trees are established or habitat damaged).
Evidence that scrub, brambles or trees have been allowed to spread.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of burning on flush, coastal or wet heath.	<b>Breach of this requirement will be applied under the Universal Code.</b>		
Evidence that overall stocking rate has not been reduced on wet peatlands between 1 November and 31 March  <i>Where smaller areas of wet peatland form part of a larger parcel and stock can't be excluded.</i>	<b>Low</b> - Evidence of grazing the habitat.  <b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>

<p>Evidence of grazing on wet peatlands between 1 November and 31 March.</p> <p><i>Where wet peatland is enclosed or forms the majority of the parcel.</i></p>	<p><b>Low</b> - Evidence of grazing the habitat.</p> <p><b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable</b></p>
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## 4. Enclosed Wetland (Bog, Fen, Flush/Mire) and Marshy Grassland

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that trees have been planted on enclosed wetland.	<b>Medium</b> - up to and including 0.10ha. <b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b> (if trees are established or habitat damaged).
Evidence that trees have been planted on marshy grassland without prior approval from Welsh Government.	<b>Medium</b> - up to and including 0.10ha. <b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b> (if trees are established or habitat damaged).
Evidence that more than 30% of soft rush or undesirable vegetation species has been cut or topped in any one year on marshy grassland.	<b>Low</b> - 30% - 50% cut or topped. <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 50% cut or topped	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence that scrub has been allowed to spread.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that grazing has taken place on enclosed wetland (bog, fen, flush/mire) between 1 November and 31 March.	<b>Low</b> - Evidence of grazing but no damage to habitat.  <b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence marshy grassland has been managed as a haymeadow within a Designated Site without consent from NRW	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

## 5. Enclosed Semi-Natural Dry Grassland (acid, neutral, calcareous and calaminarian)

- a) Where managed as grazed pasture
- b) Where managed as hay meadow

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

### a) Where managed as grazed pasture

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met.	<b>Low</b>  <b>Medium</b> – where required sward heights not met within Designated SPA sites where chough is a feature (see Chough SPA Layer on SFS Map)	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that more than 30% of soft rush or other undesirable vegetation species in a field parcel has been cut in any one year.	<b>Low</b> - 30 - 50% cut or topped.  <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 50% cut or topped.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence lime has been applied on acid, calcareous or calaminarian grassland.	<b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.  <b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that scrub or bracken has been allowed to spread.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>

**b) Where managed as hay meadow**

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that livestock were not removed by 15 May.	<b>Low</b> - Livestock removed but not until after 15 May.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that silage has been made.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 2</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the parcel was not cut and/or hay crop removed between 7 July and 30 September.	<b>Low</b> - Cutting outside of the specified periods.  <b>Medium</b> – where cutting has taken place before 15 July within Important Curlew Areas (See Breeding Waders layer on SFS Map).	<b>Extent 2</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the permissible amount of Farmyard Manure (FYM) that can be applied has been exceeded.	<b>Low</b> - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha.  <b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.  <b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence lime has been applied on acid, calcareous or calaminarian grassland.	<p><b>Low</b> - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the cut material has not been removed from the meadow.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that scrub or bracken has been allowed to spread.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the parcel has been grazed within 4 weeks of hay being cut.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	Rectifiable Permanent

## 6. Upland Open Habitats

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
An up-to-date stocking diary is not available for inspection.	<b>Low</b> - Records available but incomplete.  <b>Medium</b> - No records made available on request.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence the habitat has not been grazed in line with the minimum and/or maximum Livestock Units per hectare (LUs/ha).  If minimum level has not been met or if maximum level has been exceeded.	<b>Low</b> - if difference in stocking rate is 20% or less.  <b>Medium</b> - if difference in stocking rate is greater than 20%.  <b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>  <b>Rectifiable</b>
Evidence that more than 30% of soft rush or other undesirable vegetation species in a field parcel has been cut in any one year.	<b>Low</b> - 30 - 50% cut or topped.  <b>Medium</b> - Greater than 50% cut or topped.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>

## 7. Dense Bracken

### **Requirements:**

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
<b>A breach against any of the requirements under this habitat classification will be applied under the Universal Code.</b>			

## 8. Traditional Orchards

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that sward height requirements have not been met or grass has not been cut and removed between two and four times per year.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that trees have been debarked	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that existing fruit trees have not been retained.	Medium	Extent 1: 1-5 trees.  Extent 2: over 5 trees.	Permanent
Evidence that all deadwood has not been retained in the orchard.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that mistletoe has been pruned out.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the permissible amount of Farmyard Manure (FYM) that can be applied has been exceeded.	Low - Where damage is minimal and less than 0.10ha.  Medium - Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.  High - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent

Evidence that tar oil washes have been used.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
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## 9. Scrub (Including scattered and less dense bracken)

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that existing areas of native scrub have not been retained. (Cutting to prevent spreading is acceptable).	Medium	Measurable	Permanent

## 10. Wood Pasture

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that existing scattered trees have not been retained.	<b>Low</b> - Tree diameter between 10cm and 45cm.	<b>Extent 1:</b> 1-5 trees.	<b>Permanent</b>
	<b>Medium</b> - Tree diameter greater than 45cm.	<b>Extent 2:</b> over 5 trees.	
Evidence that all deadwood has not been retained.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that trees have been debarked.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that existing areas of scrub have not been retained.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

## 11. Permanent Wildlife Ponds

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the pond has been allowed to silt up or dry out through vegetation establishment.	Low  <b>Medium</b> - if damage caused.	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that tree / shrub coppicing has not been carried out 15cm above the ground level.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that ornamental or aquatic plants, fish or animals have been released into the pond	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of de-silting, tree or scrub clearance carried out between 15 October 2026 and 15 January 2027.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that more than a third of the pond area has been cleared of excessive silt or vegetation in any one year.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that where present, the fenced-out pond buffers have not been maintained in a stock proof condition.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of trampling and / or poaching causing damage to the pond and / or banksides.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable  <b>Permanent</b>

Evidence of application of inputs within a 10m buffer of the pond bankside.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of application of organic or inorganic fertilisers such as slurry, sewage sludge, chicken manure or fish meal within a 10m buffer of the pond bankside.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of damage caused to the bank and/or riparian vegetation due to use of machinery within 5m of the water's edge.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of scrub removal or dredging where there is evidence of otters or otter holts in the pond or bank.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the pond has been over-deepened and/or creation of steep banks.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of seeds being sown within the pond buffer area.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent

## 12. Newly created habitat areas on improved land

- i) New streamside corridors
- ii) Newly restored peat
- iii) No input grassland from previous schemes
- iv) Any other improved or previously afforested land which is under habitat creation management

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for this broad habitat classification, listed in Annex 2 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

#### i) Breaches for New Streamside Corridors

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that fencing has not been maintained in stockproof condition.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the area has been grazed.	Low  <b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b>	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that vegetation has been cut or topped except to control injurious weeds.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that fallen wood has been removed from or adjacent to the channel.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that bank protection has been installed.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the area has been used for vehicle activities or as a track.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent

- ii) Breaches for Newly restored peat
- iii) Breaches for No input grassland from previous schemes
- iv) Breaches for Any other improved or previously afforested land which is under habitat creation management

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence the newly created habitat is not being managed in accordance with the expected long term habitat classifications.	<p><b>Low</b> - No damage caused, but not being managed accordingly.</p> <p><b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b></p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA6) – TEMPORARY HABITAT CREATION ON IMPROVED LAND

### Temporary Habitat Creation

If you do not have sufficient semi-natural permanent habitat, established broadleaf woodland over 0.1ha in size, hedgerows restored or created under the Glastir Advanced, Glastir Small Grants or Small Grants – Environment schemes since 1 April 2022, or hedgerows meeting the ‘good condition’ definition you **must** create temporary habitat on improved land to meet the 10% habitat requirement annually.

#### **Requirements:**

Comply with all requirements for UA6 Temporary habitat creation on improved land, listed in Section J6 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b>
	<b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January.		<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

**Requirements:**

Comply with the details set out Annex 3: UA6 Temporary habitat creation on improved land – requirements of habitat creation option selected.

**1. Breaches for fallow crop margins**

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the fallow crop has not been established next to cereals, oil seed rape, linseed or root crop.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the fallow margin is not to the required minimum width of 3 metres.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the crop was not established before 15 May 2026 for cereals, linseed or oil seed rape; or before 1 July 2026 for root crops.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the seed bed has not been cultivated annually.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of grazing.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that nutrients have been applied.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of weed control either by application of pesticides or mechanical weed control.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of use of herbicides, other than for spot treatment of notifiable weeds or invasive non-native species (INNS).	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the fallow crop margin has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat - apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>2. Breaches for unfertilised, unsprayed and unharvested cereal or linseed headlands</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the crop was not established before 15 May 2026.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the headland along the edge of the crop is less than the required minimum width of 3 metres.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the cereal or linseed headland has been fertilised, sprayed or harvested.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that the unharvested headland has not been retained or has been grazed before 15 February 2027.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence the headland has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>3. Breaches for fixed rough grass margin on arable land</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence that the grass margin has not been retained in the same location for a minimum of three continuous years or for duration of SFS claim period, if shorter.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that a grass margin of at least 3 metres wide has not been established adjacent to a cereal, oil seed rape or linseed crop by 15 May 2026; or by 1 July 2026 if adjacent to a root crop.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that grass has been cut before 1 August in the first year.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that more than 50% of the area has been mowed at any one time or has been cut more than once in three years.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

Evidence that the required seed mix has not been sown or seed label or invoices have not been retained.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of grazing.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that nutrients have been applied.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of application of pesticides (except to spot treat and control injurious weeds).	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the rough grass margin has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

#### 4. Breaches for rotational rough grass margin on arable land

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that a grass margin of at least 3 metres wide has not been established adjacent to a cereal, oil seed rape or linseed crop by 15 May 2026; or by 1 July 2026 if adjacent to a root crop.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that grass has been cut before 1 August 2026.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that more than 50% of the area has been mowed at any one time or has been cut more than once in three years (where the margin has been retained in the same location).	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that cutting or mowing has taken place where the margin has been rotated.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent

Evidence that the required seed mix has not been sown.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of grazing by livestock	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that nutrients have been applied.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of application of pesticides (except to spot treat and control injurious weeds).	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence the rough grass margin has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>5. Breaches for unsprayed spring sown cereal and protein crop mix with stubbles retained</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence that stubble has not been retained until 15 February 2027.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that an eligible crop has not been sown.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the required seed mixture has not been sown or seed label or invoices have not been retained.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that a 1 metre grass buffer strip has not been retained adjacent to a hedge, earth bank or watercourse.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the crop was not sown between 1 March 2026 and 15 May 2026.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence of ploughing or cultivating before 1 March 2026.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the crop has been under sown.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that pesticides have been applied or mechanical weeding has taken place after the crop has established.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the crop has been desiccated prior to harvesting.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the crop has been harvested before 1 August 2026, or within 14 weeks after sowing.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the crops have not been sown on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>6. Breaches for retain cereal winter stubbles</b>			
Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the straw post-harvest has not been removed within 2 weeks and the area allowed to regenerate naturally.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that maize, sorghum or undersown stubbles were sown.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of use of herbicides, other than for spot treatment of notifiable weeds or INNS.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that herbicides have been used before 15 February 2026.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent

Evidence that naturally regenerated vegetation has been cut before 15 February 2026.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that slurry has been applied between harvest and 15 February 2026.	Medium	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of grazing by livestock before 15 February 2026.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that manure has been stored on the area.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of supplementary feeding.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of ploughing, cultivating or direct drilling before 1 March 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the cereal crop has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>7. Breaches for wildlife cover crop on improved land</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the cultivated seedbed is less than 3 metres wide.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the crop was not established before 15 May.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence the cover crop mix is not a multi species wildlife or game cover crop.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent

Evidence of use of herbicides, other than for spot treatment of notifiable weeds or INNS.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that an area of failed crop has not been re-sown.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence the crop has been under sown.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that maize has been sown.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that an area has been cut or grazed before 15 <sup>th</sup> March in the year after the crop was sown.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of the ineligible use of insecticides, fungicides or molluscicides.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence the cover crop has not been established on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>8. Breaches for unsprayed, unfertilized and uncultivated buffer adjacent to existing habitat (including open water) on improved grassland</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the grass buffer is less than 12 metre wide.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of use of fertilisers on the buffer.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of use of herbicides or pesticides	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence that the buffer has been cultivated.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the buffer has not been created on improved grassland.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		

<b>9. Breaches for mixed leys on improved land</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence that the required seed mix and/or seed rate has not been sown.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence seed labels have not been retained.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the mixed ley has not been retained for three years or for the duration of the SFS claim period if shorter.	Measurable	Measurable	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of grazing or mowing between 1 May and 31 July.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that seeds were not sown between 15 April and 15 September.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that a 1 metre grass buffer strip has not been retained adjacent to a hedge, earth bank or watercourse.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of ploughing or cultivating before 1 March.	Low	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence of inappropriate use of Plant Protection Products and / or inorganic fertilisers after the ley had been established.	Medium	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent

Evidence the mixed ley has not been sown on improved land.	<b>If evidence of damage to habitat – apply breach under UC</b>		
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<b>10. Breaches for late cut improved grasslands</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence that the parcel has been grazed, cut, mowed, harrowed, rolled, topped or any other mechanical operations have been undertaken between 6 May and 15 July 2026	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

<b>11. Breaches for improved grassland allowed to set seed</b>			
<b>Description of breach</b>	<b>Severity</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Permanence</b>
Evidence the minimum strip of 12 metre wide has not been achieved.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of cutting or grazing between 1 June 2026 and 28 February 2027.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable</b> <b>Permanent</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA7) – DESIGNATED SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for UA7 Designated Site Management Plan, listed in Section J7 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Designated Site Management Plan has not been developed by 31 December 2030.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA8) – HEDGEROW MANAGEMENT

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for UA8 Hedgerow Management, listed in Section J8 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that at least one hedgerow tree for every 50m of hedgerow has not been established and or maintained for hedgerows managed by cutting/trimming.	Low	Extent 2	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the same hedgerow has been trimmed or cut in successive years, and no exemption applies.	Low	Extent 2	Permanent
Evidence incremental growth of at least 5cm between trimming has not been achieved to meet the width and height requirement.	Low	Extent 2	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	Low - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  Medium - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	Extent 1	Rectifiable Permanent
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.	High	Extent 1	Permanent

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA9) – WOODLAND MAINTENANCE

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for UA9 Woodland Maintenance listed in Section J9 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
<p>Evidence of the following activities within a Designated Site without consent from NRW;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felling of trees</li> <li>• Removal of dead wood</li> <li>• Use of agrochemicals including fertilisers, herbicide and/or pesticides</li> <li>• Supplementary Feeding</li> <li>• Use of heavy machinery</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium</b> – Damaged area is less than or equal to 1ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 1ha.</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that deadwood has not been retained to at least 5% of the stand volume.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that open spaces have not been retained.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence pruning or lopping has not been undertaken appropriately with a clean cut.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of cultivation or ploughing soil within the root protection area of trees.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of the use of agrochemicals, including fertilisers, herbicide and/or pesticides.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence that heavy machinery has been used.	<p><b>Low</b> - machinery used but no evidence of damage.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - where there's evidence of soil compaction, root disturbance or bark damage.</p>	<b>Extent 2</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of trenching, digging, or soil stripping near trees.	<p><b>Low</b> - where no evidence of damage.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - where evidence of damage to roots or trees.</p>	<b>Extent 2</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of materials stored at the base of trees.	<b>Low</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of burning or fires being lit near trees.	<p><b>Medium</b> - Damaged area is less than or equal to 0.10ha.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Damaged area is greater than 0.10ha.</p>	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of supplementary feeding within a broadleaf woodland.	<p><b>Low</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding but no damage.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - Evidence of supplementary feeding and damage to habitat land e.g. poaching nitrification of soil.</p> <p><b>High</b> - Unsuitable supplementary feeding where there is damage to habitat land which cannot be restored to its original condition by the end of the growing season.</p>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>

Evidence of unapproved earth moving activities within the woodland.	<b>Medium</b> - Less than or equal to 0.10ha.  <b>High</b> - Greater than 0.10ha.	<b>Measurable</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence the woodland has been used for unapproved off-road vehicle activities.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence of construction of new tracks, roads, yards, loading bays or stacking areas, or any new structures within the woodland.	<b>Medium</b> - Less than or equal to 1ha.  <b>High</b> - Greater than 1ha.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence trees have been cut, trimmed or felled during the bird nesting season 1 March and 31 August.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of debarking of trees, poaching due to impact of grazing within woodland.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.  <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA10) – TREE AND HEDGEROW PLANTING OPPORTUNITY PLAN

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for UA10 Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan listed in Section J10 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that a tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA11) – HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

### Requirements:

Comply with the detailed requirements for UA11 Historic Environment listed in Section J11 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence of scrub or vegetation management carried out during the bird nesting season 1 March to 31 August.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence of introducing new water troughs inside a Scheduled Monument area or near historic features or parkland trees.	<b>Low</b> - No damage.  <b>Medium</b> - Poaching or erosion damage caused by livestock.	Extent 1	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence that basic erosion repair has not been carried out on a scheduled monument.	Low	Extent 1	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of damage where vehicles have been used on wet or saturated ground.	Medium	Extent 1	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>
Evidence of damage to a Historic Environment Feature (HEF). This could be as a result of any of the following:  a) Ground disturbance or excavation, especially extending beneath topsoil.  b) Dumping or storage of material, including temporary storage.	<b>Medium</b>  <b>High</b> - where feature has been destroyed or removed.	Extent 1	<b>Rectifiable</b>  <b>Permanent</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Removal of any material, including stones, soil or subsoil.</li> <li>d) Visible signs of active erosion (loss or disturbance of topsoil or subsoil) caused by livestock, vehicles or other agricultural practice.</li> <li>e) Planting trees.</li> <li>f) Allowing scrub to establish and develop unless agreed for conservation objectives.</li> <li>g) Ploughing or reseeding uncultivated sites.</li> <li>h) Displacing individual stone features.</li> <li>i) Deeper cultivation than in previous years.</li> </ul>			
<p>Evidence of damage to a registered historic park and garden. This could be as a result of any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) supplementary feed or introduce new water troughs near historic features or parkland trees.</li> <li>b) allow livestock to erode or damage parkland or garden/historic features.</li> <li>c) allow livestock to damage parkland trees i.e. bark stripping, root damage and soil compaction.</li> <li>d) damage historic routes through parkland.</li> <li>e) remove historic plantings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium</b></p> <p><b>High</b> - where feature has been destroyed or removed.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>

<p>f) use machinery to damage parkland trees.</p> <p>g) remove or disturb structural or landscape features.</p> <p>h) dump or store material, including temporary storage.</p> <p>i) remodel the landscape such as to significantly re-profile the topography i.e undertake major earth works or introduction of new infrastructure.</p>			
<p>Evidence historic park, garden buildings and structures have not been retained</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> <b>High</b> - Destroyed or removed</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence that traditional farm buildings or remnant structures have not been retained.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b> <b>High</b> - Destroyed or removed</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence geo-tagged photos have not been retained to evidence deterioration of a scheduled monument, or as evidence for removing a traditional farm building determined to be a hazard</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence of re-bedding loose stones, re-pointing or re-rendering being carried out on traditional buildings between 1 November and 15 March or 1 April and 31 August.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>

<p>Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.</p>	<p><b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027.</p> <p><b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.</p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Rectifiable Permanent</b></p>
<p>Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>	<p><b>Extent 1</b></p>	<p><b>Permanent</b></p>

## UNIVERSAL ACTION (UA12) – ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

<b>Requirements:</b> Comply with the detailed requirements for UA12 listed in Section J12 of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026.			
Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard has not been updated by 15 January 2027.	<b>Low</b> - where not updated by 15 January 2027. <b>Medium</b> - where not updated by 31 January 2027.	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Rectifiable Permanent</b>
Evidence that the SFS Universal Dashboard declaration is false.  <i>(Example of this could be where AHIC template, Biosecurity Assessment, body condition scoring training, herd and/or flock scoring for body conditioning and and herd / flock mobility scoring has been confirmed as complete but later found not to be completed.</i>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
<b>Animal Health Improvement Cycle (AHIC)</b>			
Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence the necessary steps of the AHIC template have not been completed by 31 December 2026.	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Extent 1</b>	<b>Permanent</b>

## Incoming Animal Biosecurity Risk Assessment

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence the biosecurity assessment for incoming animals has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent

## Animal Welfare

Description of breach	Severity	Extent	Permanence
Evidence that training in Body Condition Scoring (BCS) and mobility scoring has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that herd and/or flock scoring for body conditioning has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent
Evidence that herd and/or flock scoring for mobility scoring has not been completed by 31 December 2026.	Medium	Extent 1	Permanent