



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# **Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: Guidance 2026 Addendum**

**Important Notice: It is essential that you read and understand this booklet if you intend to apply for the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer in 2026.**

**This booklet must be read in conjunction with the Sustainable Farming Scheme – Universal Layer: guidance 2026.**

**February 2026**



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# Introduction

This addendum refers to the Welsh Government Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) – Universal Layer: guidance 2026 published on 17 December 2025.

This is now superseded where relevant by the changes and additions in this document.

All changes and additions are made to:

1. **Section H: Universal Code H3 Part 3: Trees and H4 Part 4: Landscape Features.** These changes relate to the requirements to retain trees on your holding.
2. **Section J4: UA4 Continuous Professional Development (CPD). J4.3 Requirements.** This change clarifies the requirements of external learning (non-Farming Connect)
3. **Section J8: UA8: Hedgerow Management. J8.3 Requirements.** Change to clarify the requirements for incremental cutting/ trimming of hedgerows and cutting/trimming every other year, and an addition to clarify that allowing existing hedgerow plants to grow up can count towards the requirements of UA10: Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan.
4. **Section J11: UA11: Historic Environment. J11.2 Who needs to complete this Universal Action.** This addition clarifies the responsibilities for tenants in relation to this Universal Action.
5. **Section L: Application and Validation. L11 Supporting Documents.** These additions clarify the late submission deadline for supporting documents to evidence the 550 standard labour hours and the deadline for the submission of evidence to support the removal or of amendments to habitat areas on the HBR constraints layer for UA5: Habitat Maintenance.
6. **Section Q: Payment reductions, sanctions, exclusions and the provision for the correction of errors. Q3 Over-declared land.** This addition clarifies that there will be no reduction in payment if the difference between determined and declared Whole Farm Area is less than 0.10 hectares.
7. **Annex 3: UA6 Temporary habitat creation on improved land – requirements of habitat creation options. 9. Mixed leys on improved land (also referred to as multi-species or herbal leys) with closed period.** This change clarifies that any ryegrass hybrids and cultivars must not be considered as a separate species to ryegrass.

8. **Annex 4: Crop Codes.** The addition of Table 3, which provides details of the crop codes which are compatible with Habitat Classifications and Temporary Habitat Options for UA5: Habitat Maintenance, Habitat Classifications and UA6: Temporary Habitat Creation on Improved Land.
9. **Annex 6: Key Dates.** This change clarifies the submission deadline for evidence to support the removal of or amendments to habitat areas on the HBR constraints layer for UA5: Habitat Maintenance.

# 1. D2 Land Eligibility

Derogation from the 10-month management control requirement for 2026

**Additional text:**

If you are a beneficiary of a will that is settled between 28 February and 15 May, you must apply for a derogation using the Derogation Form on RPW Online before submitting the SFS application on your SAF.

## 2. Section H: Universal Code

### H5 Part 3: Trees

**Original Text:**

*The aim of these requirements is to retain and maintain all trees on your holding, including existing mature, veteran and ancient trees as well as any tree planted as a demonstration of progress towards delivery of your tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan.*

**Replaced by:**

The aim of these requirements is to retain and maintain all existing mature, veteran and ancient trees as well as any tree planted as a demonstration of progress towards delivery of your tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan.

**Original Text:**

*Do not:*

- *Fell any trees unless an exemption applies*

**Replaced by:**

Do not:

- Fell any existing mature, veteran or ancient tree, or
- Any tree planted as a demonstration of progress towards delivery of your tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan, unless an exemption applies.

### H6 Part 4: Landscape features

**Original Text:**

*Do not:*

- *Fell any trees unless an exemption applies*

**Replaced by:**

Do not:

- Fell any existing mature, veteran or ancient tree or any tree planted as a demonstration of progress towards delivery of your tree and hedgerow planting opportunity plan unless an exemption applies.

## **3. Section J4: UA4: Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

### **J4.3 Requirements**

#### **External Learning (non-Farming Connect)**

##### **Original Text:**

*We will not accept attendance at conferences, roadshow events or meetings. However, where these events include structured session or discussion groups that meet the above criteria (e.g. they meet one or more of the SLM objectives) these can be considered, provided you retain evidence of participation and details of the learning undertaken.*

##### **Replaced by:**

Attendance alone at conferences, roadshows and general meetings will not be accepted.

#### **Conference Sessions and Other Educational Events**

To reflect the unique delivery format of conferences and other educational events, specific sessions within these events will be considered eligible where:

1. they meet one or more of the SLM objectives listed above.
2. the participant retains evidence of attendance, as per the recordkeeping responsibilities outlined below.

Elements of a conference or event that are not linked to an SLM objective (such as exhibition areas, networking, or general attendance) are not eligible.

External CPD opportunities will be monitored, and the requirements will be reviewed and reassessed for future years of the Scheme.

## 4. Section J8: UA8: Hedgerow Management

### J8.3 Requirements

#### Original Text:

- *You must allow the hedges to grow thicker and taller by trimming them to a slightly higher and wider point each time they are trimmed or cut. These should be at least 5cm incremental growth between trimming. Once the hedge has reached a width and height of 3m by 2m (or 2m by 3m) you have the choice to retain it at this size through incremental cutting.*

*We recognise where hedgerows are exposed to strong winds in coastal or upland areas, hedgerow growth may be slower and not meet the 5cm expectation, however, the requirement for incremental growth and trimming still applies.*

#### Replaced by:

- You must allow the hedges to grow thicker and taller by trimming them to a slightly higher and wider point each time they are trimmed or cut. There should be at least 5cm incremental growth between trimming. Once the hedge has reached a width and height of 3m by 2m (or 2m by 3m) you have the choice to retain it at this size through cutting every other year.

We recognise where hedgerows are exposed to strong winds in coastal or upland areas, hedgerow growth may be slower and not meet the 5cm expectation, however, the requirement for incremental growth and trimming every other year still applies.

### Allowing existing hedgerow plants to grow up

#### Additional Text:

Existing hedgerow plants allowed to grow up as hedgerow trees can count towards the requirements of UA10: Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan.

## **5. Section J11: UA11: Historic Environment**

### **J11.2 Who needs to complete this Universal Action?**

#### **Additional Text:**

If you claim for SFS – Universal Layer on tenanted land on which there are scheduled monuments, historic environment features, registered historic parks and gardens or traditional farm buildings that the landlord has reserved from the tenancy agreement, the requirements will not apply as these features do not form part of your tenancy agreement, and you do not have management control over them.

However, where any or all of these features have not been reserved by the landlord, your responsibility to these features will be determined by the maintenance, repair and replacement clauses of your tenancy agreement. For tenancies regulated by the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 you may also need to refer to the relevant regulatory model repairing clauses. These are deemed to be incorporated into your tenancy agreement where the tenancy agreement is otherwise silent or incomplete in respect of repairing obligations as between the landlord and the tenant.

## **6. Section L: Application and Validation**

### **L11 Supporting Documents**

#### **Evidence of Eligibility – 550 standard labour hours**

##### **Additional Text:**

You must submit supporting documents by 15 May 2026. Supporting documents submitted from 16 May 2026 up to and including 9 June 2026 will incur a late claim penalty of 1% per working day.

Supporting documents received after 9 June 2026 will not be accepted and your claim for SFS Universal Layer may be rejected.

#### **Evidence to support the removal or amendments to habitat areas on the HBR constraints layer for UA5: Habitat Maintenance**

##### **Additional Text:**

All Supporting Documents which are required for SFS - Universal Layer in relation to the removal or amendment of habitat areas on a constraint layer where applicable, must be received by the Welsh Government by 31 December 2026.

You should manage your land in accordance with the requirements of the Universal Code and the relevant habitat classification for UA5: Habitat Maintenance until you receive confirmation your request has been approved.

## **7. Section Q: Payment reductions, sanctions, exclusions and the provision for the correction of errors**

### **Q3 Over-declared land**

#### **Additional text:**

Where the determined Whole Farm Area is less than that declared, payment will be calculated on the lesser area, however, where the difference is determined to be less than 0.10 hectares, payment will be based on the area declared.

## **8. Annex 3: UA6 Temporary habitat creation on improved land – requirements of habitat creation options**

### **9. Mixed leys on improved land (also referred to as multi-species or herbal leys) with closed period**

#### **Requirements**

##### **Original Text:**

- *establish a mixed ley, comprising minimum five grass species, three legume species and three herb species.*
- *minimum seed rate 25 kg / ha.*
- *maximum Ryegrass content 6 kg / ha.*
- *maximum other grass seed content 9 kg / ha (maximum total grass seed content 15 kg / ha).*

##### **Replaced by:**

- establish a mixed ley, comprising minimum five grass species, three legume species and three herb species. For the purposes of this SFS UA, hybrids and cultivars are not considered as separate species
- minimum seed rate 25 kg / ha
- maximum Ryegrass content (including ryegrass hybrids/cultivars) t 6 kg / ha
- maximum other grass seed content 9 kg / ha (maximum total grass seed content 15 kg / ha)

## 9. Annex 4: Crop Codes

### Addition of Annex 4: Table 3:

#### SFS Universal Layer – Compatible Crop Codes for UA5: Habitat Maintenance and UA6: Temporary Habitat Creation on Improved Land.

The table below confirms the crop codes which are compatible with each of the Habitat classifications.

When completing the field data section of the SAF you should declare the crop codes which correctly describes the crop cover of your parcels.

You should declare at least one crop code compatible with each of the Habitat Classifications on that parcel, in the field data section of your SAF 2026.

If the crop cover of the parcel does not contain at least one of the crop codes detailed below for the Habitat classification, consideration should be given to amending the Habitat classification of the declared habitat in the Habitat Baseline Review.

Incompatible crop code declarations will delay the validation of your SFS Universal Layer claim.

| <b>Permanent Habitat Classification (UA5)</b> | <b>Compatible Crop Code</b>  |
|---|--|
| Coastal Saltmarsh                             | SM2 - Saltmarshes - Grazed<br>SM1 - Saltmarshes - Stock Excluded   |
| Coastal sand dune and shingle beach           | SD1 - Sand Dunes<br>YY41 - Scree / Rock Outcrops / Boulders - scattered<br>ZZ40 - Scree / Rock Outcrops / Boulders / Sand - Group          |
| Lowland and coastal heath                     | HE7 - Heathlands -Grazed<br>HE6 - Heathlands -Stock Excluded<br>RU1 – Rushes<br>HE9 - Heather<br>GR2 - Grass -Permanent Grass Over 5 Years |

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Enclosed wetland and marshy grassland | RE1 – Reeds<br>RU1 – Rushes<br>GR2 – Grass -Permanent Grass Over 5 years  |
| Enclosed semi-natural dry grassland   | RU1 – Rushes<br>GR2 – Grass -Permanent Grass Over 5 years   |
| Upland open habitats                  | HE7 - Heathlands -Grazed<br>HE9 – Heather<br>GR2 – Grass -Permanent Grass Over 5 years  |
| Traditional orchards                  | AP4 – Apples<br>NU2 – Chestnuts<br>NU4 – Walnuts<br>NU5 – Hazel / Cob Nuts<br>OR3 – Orchard – Mixed<br>PE10 – Pears<br>PL2 – Plums / Greengages / Cherries / Almonds<br>TP8 – Trees with a Preservation Order   |
| Dense bracken                         | YY21 – Bracken – Scattered<br>ZZ20 - Bracken – Group  |
| Scrub                                 | ZZ22 - Scrub/gorse/briar - group<br>YY23 - Scrub/gorse/briar - scattered<br>GC3 – Field corners or woodland edge - Stock Excluded<br>GS1 - Scrub / Gorse / Briar – stock excluded under a management agreement<br>GS2 - Scrub / Gorse / Briar - stock excluded<br>SC2 – Streamside Corridors - stock excluded |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Wood pasture                                 | YY14 - Coniferous Woodland – Scattered<br>YY15 - Broadleaf Woodland – Scattered<br>ZZ10 - Coniferous Woodland – Group<br>ZZ11 - Broadleaf Woodland – Group |
| Permanent wildlife ponds                     | PD1 - Ponds Eligible<br>PD2 - Ponds – Eligible for SFS up to 1ha or less   |
| Newly created habitat areas on improved land | GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5years<br>GR1 - Grass – Temporary – Under 5 Years<br>SC2 - Streamside Corridors stock excluded                           |

| <b>Temporary Habitat Classification (UA6)</b>                        | <b>Compatible Crop Code</b>  |
|--|--|
| Unfertilised, unsprayed and unharvested cereal and linseed headlands | BA4 – Barley – winter sown<br>BA5 – Barley – spring sown<br><br>OA4 – Oats – winter sown<br>OA5 – Oats – spring sown<br><br>TC3 – Triticale – winter sown<br>TC4 – Triticale – spring sown<br><br>WT1 – Wheat – winter sown<br>WT2 – Wheat – spring sown<br><br>LI4 – Linseed/Linola – spring sown<br>LI5 – Linseed/Linola – winter sown |
| Fixed rough grass margins on arable land                             | GR1 - Grass – temporary – under 5 years<br>GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5 years<br>FM1 - Field Margins  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Rotational rough grass margins on arable land   | GR1 - Grass – temporary – under 5 years<br>GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5 years<br>FM1 - Field Margins  |
| Unsprayed spring sown cereal and protein crop mix with stubbles retained  | UM1 - Unsprayed spring sown cereal and protein crop mix  |
| Retain cereal winter stubbles   | BA4 – Barley – winter sown<br>BA5 – Barley – spring sown<br><br>OA4 – Oats – winter sown<br>OA5 – Oats – spring sown<br><br>TC3 – Triticale – winter sown<br>TC4 – Triticale – spring sown<br><br>WT1 – Wheat – winter sown<br>WT2 – Wheat – spring sown |
| Wildlife cover crop on improved land  | WB1 - Wildlife Cover Crop  |
| Unsprayed, unfertilized and uncultivated buffer adjacent to existing habitat (including open water) on improved grassland | GR1 - Grass – temporary – under 5 years<br>GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5 years<br>FM1 - Field Margins  |
| Mixed leys on improved land (also referred to as multi-species or herbal leys)  | ML1 - Mixed Leys   |
| Late cut improved grasslands  | GR1 - Grass – temporary – under 5 years<br>GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5 years<br>GR8 – Grass -permanent – re-sown in last 12 months   |
| Improved grassland allowed to set seed  | GR1 - Grass – temporary – under 5 years<br>GR2 - Grass -permanent Grass over 5 years-<br>GR8 – Grass -permanent – re-sown in last 12 months  |

## 10. Annex 6: Key Dates

Original Text:

| Date        | Event   |
|-------------|---|
| 15 May 2026 | Closing date for submission of supporting documents without penalty |

Replaced by:

| Date             | Event  |
|------------------|--|
| 15 May 2026      | Closing date for submission of supporting documents to evidence eligibility (evidence of 550 standard labour hours) without penalty                                |
| 31 December 2026 | Closing date for submission of supporting documents to evidence request to amend or remove habitat areas on the HBR constrains layer for UA5: Habitat Maintenance. |