

ADVISORY NOTES -GLASTIR

Title: Actions on farms to improve water quality for Freshwater Pearl Mussels

Why manage for the habitat/ specie/feature (why is it so important?)

- Freshwater pearl mussels are critically endangered in Wales. Remaining populations show little or no sign of juvenile recruitment – they will become extinct if this continues.
- This species is sensitive to even relatively small amounts of nutrients and silt entering the streams and rivers where they are found. The juvenile mussels are much more sensitive to these pressures than the adult mussels.
- Taking relatively straightforward measures can really make a difference to help the conservation of this species.

What are the management guidelines, what do you need to do to achieve the ideal?

- Establishing buffer zones along watercourses will help maintain riparian habitat quality.
- Restrict livestock access to rivers and the streams forming tributaries of those rivers where freshwater pearl mussels are found. Restricting stock access to watercourses can reduce damage to river habitats through physical damage or eutrophication.
- Maintain existing riparian fencing in a good, stock proof, condition.
- Ensure surface water run-off from farmyards, tracks, hard-standing feeding areas, roofs, silage storage areas, livestock pens etc is managed appropriately. Surface water management advice should be sought if required, but “dirty” water should not find its way directly into watercourses. Seek advice from your Glastir Project Officer if this is an issue.
- **Maintain a 20 metre buffer strip alongside watercourses when ploughing and re-seeding grassland or planting fodder crops. The buffer strip will help absorb run-off from the ploughed field.**
- If applying inorganic or organic fertilisers such as farmyard manure, slurry, sewage sludge or chicken manure to fields with a watercourse running through or alongside it, maintain a 20 metre buffer zone to help absorb run-off.
- Do not supplementary feed stock in any areas adjoining rivers or watercourses.
- Do not install field drains (either surface or buried) in any fields’ adjacent pearl mussel rivers.
- Do not remove gravel or clean ditches or streams where pearl mussels may be present – always seek advice from your Glastir Project Officer.
- Do not carry out any engineering works to rivers or streams without consulting your Project Officer and Natural Resources Wales. This includes gravel and shoal removal, dredging, revetment, anti-erosion works or any other works that may give rise to siltation or pollution to the river.
- Manage riparian trees appropriately – do not remove fallen deadwood in the river unless it is causing a flood risk – please consult your Glastir Project Officer for advice.
- Avoid using herbicides or pesticides within 20 metres of any watercourse.
- Do not drive vehicles or livestock through watercourses (including established fords). If avoidance of such crossing points is not feasible, installation of permanent dry crossings in these locations is recommended. Seek advice from your Glastir Project Officer before doing this.
- Do not turn out livestock that have been dipped, wormed or treated with other veterinary products in fields adjacent to rivers, streams or with unfenced ditches flowing through them for at least 2 weeks after treatment.