1. Introduction

This guidance is a national framework for land managers, owners or their agents in the uplands. It concerns infrastructure works on moorlands that are also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and/or a European site. It gives guidance on the following common moorland infrastructure works:

- Water scrapes
- Grit Stations
- Shooting butts

Other moorland guidance topics under consideration are:

- Dry heath restoration
- Moorland track maintenance

This guide is also intended to be a useful reference for Natural England staff and its principles can be applied by all other upland managers outside the designated sites network. Natural England's aim for the guide is for it to be clear to users and help promote consistency and good practice across the uplands.

This guide sets out where the works are likely to need permission on SSSIs (called consent) and where they will not. It also sets out how Natural England makes its SSSI consent decision. This should help with work planning for managers, and ensure that works are compatible with and enhance the nature conservation features of designated sites. The guidance has been prepared in consultation with the Defra Uplands Stakeholder Forum, which includes all major uplands organisations. This guidance does not give consent to any person, nor does it remove the need to seek consent from Natural England or any other relevant authority.

2. SSSI Notice and Consent

- If the land lies outside a designated site you do not need to give notice and gain consent before proceeding;
- Where permission is required (we call this a Notice), providing information (in writing) and following the notes under the checklist headings will enable Natural England to process your application promptly. If there is not enough information for us to make a decision we will need to ask you for further information which may delay our response;
- Before submitting a formal Notice, we encourage discussion of your proposal at an early stage with your Natural England advisor, especially where the impacts of the proposed works on designated sites are unclear. The checklists within each section should help guide your discussion.

---

1 A European site is designated through European Union law for its nature conservation features. Includes Special Protection Area (SPA) for its bird interest and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for its habitat and/or other species interest.
3. Natural England’s SSSI Consent decision

3.1 Legal matters
The notification papers of each SSSI or European site list the activities, including some moorland infrastructure works (operations) that could damage its special features. A description of these features and a list of activities for each SSSI can be found from following this link on our website:


If the work falls within the description of any operation on the above list for your site, you must give written Notice to Natural England before you begin.

Where a European Site is directly or indirectly affected then Natural England must also make a more detailed assessment of the proposal, but if you have followed the principles in the relevant checklists the likelihood of a significant effect should be reduced.

This guidance does not give consent to any person, nor does it remove the need to seek consent from Natural England or permission from any other relevant authority.

3.2 Applying for SSSI Consent
Speaking to your Natural England advisor will help you design your proposal to make consenting quick and easy. Consent can be given in a number of ways, through:

1. Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), or the replacement Natural Environment Land Management Scheme (NELMS) or other agri-environment agreement which includes regular management, infrastructure and capital works within a Moorland Management Plan;

2. A Moorland Infrastructure Consent (currently being trialled). Natural England recognises that grouse moor managers do not always have enough detail about some works. For example, they may wish to have a variety of butt lines available to allow flexibility on shoot days. Applying for consent in order to keep pace with the development of new lines is often difficult for moorland managers, as they are not necessarily going to be in possession of all the details they need to provide to Natural England in order for a decision to be made quickly on whether or not to consent. In this case, managers can apply for a Moorland Infrastructure Consent that lasts for a short to medium term of 2 to 5 years and gives flexibility in terms of position and specification for a schedule of works within specified locations over a whole moorland or estate. This could be used where no moorland management plan exists or where the manager does not wish to enter into an agri-environment scheme;

3. A bespoke consent to cover a specific project. An application should use the infrastructure guidance (this document) to provide the information that Natural England needs in order to consider giving consent.

3.3 How Natural England makes a Consent decision
When considering your proposal we look at the impact it will have on the habitats and species that make the designated site special. We need to assess your plans with a view to avoiding damage to the site. Ways in which you can reduce or mitigate the impact of your plan on the important habitats and species will help us to make our decision.
Where damage to a habitat or the impact on a species for which the site has been designated is significant we may not be able to grant consent or may need to put in place conditions. If this is the case, we will explain why.

Moorlands have certain habitats that are sensitive and proposals for moorland infrastructure works will require careful assessment to ensure they are not damaging in particular where they are on deep peat.

4. The Historic Environment and Uplands landscapes

The uplands are particularly important sources of information about our past as they contain almost one quarter of all Scheduled Monuments, which are dealt with by English Heritage. SSSI consent does not override the need for prior discussion and consent from English Heritage for any works affecting Scheduled Monuments. The uplands also hold some of England's most iconic landscapes and their conservation and enhancement is one of Natural England's statutory purposes.

Under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition rules (GAEC), all Scheduled Monuments and stone walls must be protected. For moorlands in Environmental Stewardship schemes (whether ELS or HLS) owners are also reminded it is a requirement of joining ELS/HLS that all historic sites and features (including archaeological sites and buildings) are marked on the agreement Farm Environment Record (FER). These, along with any sites or features that owners are advised about later and included in the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) must be retained and protected for the duration of the agreement.

5. Planning and other permissions

Certain works described in this guidance such as the creation of shooting butts or scrapes may need planning permission or permission from other public bodies. Natural England advises that as a first step you should contact the Local Planning Authority and others as appropriate for further advice before making an application for consent to Natural England.

If planning permission is required, we suggest you consult with Natural England to ascertain our likely advice to the planning authority and whether we are likely to agree with your proposals. This is because our role is to advise the planners on the impacts of the proposal on the environment and it is for them to make the final decision, taking into account a variety of factors. We would of course be happy to meet with you prior to your planning application submission to iron out any potential problems. Natural England provides a Discretionary Advisory Service for work that requires planning permission. More details can be found at the following link:

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/das/servicestandards.aspx

If planning permission is required and granted, then Natural England's consent for the works covered by that permission would not be needed.
6. How to complete each checklist

Work through this checklist to help design and locate your water scrape(s). If your work follows the notes in the checklist, there is a strong likelihood that you will obtain SSSI consent, and quickly.

Tick the box if you have considered and followed the guidance, and provide a location map. The worked example should help you in this process. Once completed, submit this checklist and any supporting information to Natural England.

1) Number and distribution

Please provide a clear indication of the number of scrapes required

The number of scrapes should be kept to the minimum reasonably required to meet the aim of the project, and the number of them specified.

2) Location

Show on a map where the scrapes are to be located

The information you should provide

More detailed guidance on what is needed

If different supply further details

Tick this box if you have provided the information and followed the notes

Introductory notes

7. Contacting Natural England

Telephone: 0845 600 3078 (local rate)
Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk
Opening times: 8.30–17:00, Monday–Friday

8. Further information:

Applicants should refer to the following sources for further information:

- The Heather and Grass Burning (HGB) Code 2007;
- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust guidance on grit stations;
  http://www.gwct.org.uk/education__advice/frequently_asked_questions/red_grouse/761.asp
- Historic Environment Records website
  http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR/
- Natural England’s guidance on ponds and scrapes, 2010
  http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/23020

Photo credits
Thanks to the Moorland Association, the Heather Trust, Nick Unwin Photography and Natural England staff.
Water Scrapes

Summary

An adequate water supply is important for livestock, and moorland birds particularly on dry heath and very dry peatlands. In some circumstances, their construction and situation can damage sensitive moorland peatland habitats. However, the construction of water scrapes on dry heathlands is likely to be beneficial for both grouse and other wildlife.

In the long, term making very dry peatlands wetter is important and where feasible bogs should be restored through grip blocking and other measures. Where this is not practicable, well sited and designed water scrapes can enhance moorlands and provide opportunities for wildlife. This also applies where restoration of a bog is in progress and the creation of water scrapes in the short term can have valuable benefits.

Natural England considers that proposals for water scrapes on a designated nature conservation site such as SSSI, SPA and SAC\(^2\) fall within one or more operations listed on the relevant SSSI notification papers and so will need permission, or Consent, under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. If the checklist in this section is followed and you talk to your Natural England advisor at an early stage, getting a decision should be a relatively quick and easy process.

The general principles in this section may also be used for non-designated sites. As such, it represents best practice measures to ensure that the natural environment is protected and so that moorland businesses can operate smoothly.

**Note this section does not cover reservoirs for the storage of water for use when fighting wild fires.**

---

2 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Special Protection Area (SPA); Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Context
On moorlands, scrapes are sometimes dug by land managers to benefit red grouse and other bird species - especially for chick development - where invertebrate populations can be enhanced by the creation of a shallow water body. These water scrapes can also be valuable in a range of other situations such as on neighbouring allotments, or where deep peat habitats have not yet had their hydrology restored.

Impacts
Well-designed and located water scrapes can have a positive impact on grouse moors and upland habitats when they fit in with the local landscape and terrain and may help to contribute to conservation objectives for protected sites.

When considering these works, the direct and indirect impacts should be taken into account by working through the Checklist below. If you design your water scrapes following the principles laid out in the checklist and provide a location map, then Natural England should be able to consider your Notice quickly.

Water Scrapes Checklist

Work through this checklist to help design and locate your water scrape(s).

If your work follows the notes in the checklist, there is a strong likelihood that you will obtain SSSI consent, and quickly.

Tick the box if you have considered and followed the guidance, and provide a location map.

The worked example should help you in this process.

Once completed, submit this checklist and any supporting information to Natural England.

Please consider whether you need planning permission.

1) Number and distribution

Please provide a clear indication of the number of scrapes required.

- The number of scrapes should be kept to the minimum reasonably required to meet the aim of the project, and the number of them specified.

2) Location

Show on a map where the scrapes are to be located.

- The scrapes may be located on acid grassland or in some cases dry heath or very dry peatlands (avoiding the sensitive habitats described below).

- You should consider placing the scrapes on areas of acid grassland or other less susceptible habitats. If this is not possible, then in some cases, water scrapes placed on dry heath habitats are likely to be compatible with a designated site’s conservation objectives and enhance the conservation value of the dry heath for example by providing suitable areas for invertebrates and roosting/drinking areas for upland waders. Their value will be increased if they are constructed to the specification outlined in this guidance. By locating water scrapes on drier habitats, there is also less likelihood of damage to the more sensitive blanket bogs and wet heath from any vehicles or machinery needed for their construction.

- Blanket bogs and wet heaths are sensitive habitats and there should not usually be a need to create water scrapes on them. However, for bogs where there are few pools, there may be places where water scrapes can be placed without affecting their value for wildlife.
**Water Scrapes Checklist continued...**

3) **Sensitive Species**

**Ensure that the water scrapes are located to avoid scarce or sensitive species as set out below.**

- Please provide a description of the species found in each location and make specific reference to any mosses (e.g., Sphagnum) and any scarce plants.
- Particular consideration should be given to the location of scarce or sensitive species. These must be avoided when identifying the location of an individual scrape. For example, Sphagnum-rich areas are much more sensitive than heather dominated areas. Please use your Natural England advisor to help identify any species of particular interest on your land.

4) **Construction**

**Set out how the water scrapes are to be created.**

Follow the construction points laid out below:

- Scrapes should be as shallow as possible, have gently sloping sides and be kept to the minimum size that is required.
- Wherever possible but without damaging existing wet areas, natural hollows or depressions should be used to avoid the need for excavations and may be lined with a suitable liner. Excavation may be a more effective way than a liner to ensure that the created water scrape retains water;
- The perimeter of the scrape should be irregular to maximise edge effect;
- Bare soil /peat should be allowed to re-vegetate naturally or by utilising any trans-located turves within 6 months.

5) **Maintenance**

**Describe how the water scrapes will be replenished. Access by vehicles as shown on the map should be designed so as not to cause damage to sensitive habitats.**

- Make sure that the water scrapes are sited so that they can be filled through rainfall and overland flow rather than diverting water courses;
- If water is piped in from watercourses, you should ensure that the scrapes are topped up via excess flow;
- Manual topping up from a water bowser should be avoided unless there is no alternative and there is no long-term damage resulting from driving water to site.

6) **Timing**

**In line with normal practice, the scrapes will be constructed to avoid disturbance to breeding birds and all vehicles will only use approved routes during this time.**

- If using a vehicle, avoid wet conditions as this is likely to result in significant ground disturbance;
- Avoid (as is normal practice) work between 1 April and 20 June as red grouse and other ground nesting birds will be nesting and are likely to be sitting on eggs or brooding young chicks.

7) **Historic Environment**

**I have checked that the scrapes are not located near or on any historic sites**

- Moorland habitats often have a historic environment interest. Although not covered by nature conservation designations, ensure that you have sought advice and confirm that there are no impacts in the historic environment from your activities.
- Scrapes should avoid known Historic Environment features.
### Worked Example: Creation of water scrapes

Showing how a Notice for scrapes can be shown to have a neutral environmental impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The construction of a series of scrapes associated with existing vehicle routes on Middle Moor Estate, (shown by grey dots on the attached map).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numbers and location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensitive habitats and species</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Mitigation measures** | 1 For each scrape, a mini digger will remove the vegetation turves and soil and these will be placed to one side and carefully stored for future use.  
2 Soil will be replaced around the excavation. Any surplus soil will be removed from site or spread thinly so as not to smother other vegetation.  
3 Heather or grass turves will be replaced around the edge of scrapes or used to re-instate any bare surfaces in the immediate vicinity  
4 Construction will avoid wet periods so that there is no adverse impact on soils or vegetation through rutting, exposure of carbon-rich soils or damage to vegetation. |
| **Post construction** | Vehicle use associated with future maintenance of scrapes will be restricted to existing tracks. Material removed from ponds as a result of routine maintenance will be disposed of in an appropriate manner and will not be dumped or stored within areas of SAC habitat unless spread thinly as described above. Maintenance of scrapes will not involve deepening or extending in any way. |
| **Other considerations** | Scrape will be located appropriately to avoid Historic Environment features such as mine spoil heaps.  
Advice was sought and received from the National Park Archaeologist (reference to letter of 01/1/1999) |

3 Around 6 ½ x 8 feet and 18 inches deep
Grit Stations

Summary

Provision of grit for grouse, whether medicated or not, is an important part of grouse management and there are a number of different ways in which grit can be provided on site. Moorland habitats are sensitive and are potentially vulnerable to damage from the locating of grit stations on them depending on how this is done. Damage to important mire vegetation, particularly peat-forming species and the potential impact on hydrological integrity requires particular consideration.

Natural England considers that if the provision of grit on a designated nature conservation site such as SSSI, SPA and SAC is carried out in the way set out in Checklist 1 then it is not covered by any of the operations listed on the relevant SSSI notification papers. Therefore, if grit is set out on a designated site as in Checklist 1 then notice will not need to be submitted to Natural England under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

If grit is not to be set out on a designated site as in Checklist 1, or other works are required to facilitate the provision of grit on a designated site then this is likely to fall within the list of operations on the relevant SSSI notification papers. Examples would include the construction of structures to support grit stations or access by vehicles.

This means that permission, or consent under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 is likely to be needed. In this case, follow Checklist 2 in this section and talk to your Natural England advisor at an early stage. If you do this, getting a decision should be a relatively quick and easy process.

The general principles in this section may also be used for non-designated sites and are designed to complement the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust best practice guidelines on the provision of grit.
Context
Red grouse seasonally take on grit to aid digestion and the supply of supplementary grit throughout the year has become a common management practice. Medicated grit is used by moorland managers to reduce the impact of cyclical effects of *Strongylosis* worm on red grouse populations as providing medication to grouse is not possible by the provision of supplementary feed or through drinking water.

Special attention is needed if grit stations fall within habitats for which the site has been designated, particularly blanket peatlands and mires and/or where there is a rich historic environment interest. This guidance aims to clarify the situation and so assist keepers to draw up their work plans.

Impacts
When considering these works, direct and indirect impacts should be taken into account by working through the checklist below. If you design your grit station following the principles laid out in Checklist 2, then Natural England should be able to consider your Notice quickly.

## Grit Stations Checklist 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work through the points on this checklist. If you are able to tick all the boxes, then the work does not fall within the Operations Likely to Damage listed on the relevant SSSI notification papers, and you do not need to give notice to Natural England.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only tick the box after you have considered this guidance and the notes in this checklist. This checklist is not to be considered in any way as constituting SSSI consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Grit is laid on the ground, in a box or tray. These are supported on a couple of turned over turfs dug by hand and/or raised on small piles on stones. The footprint of each station is not more than 50% bigger than the size of the tray.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good practice as specified by GWCT is to use lidded grit boxes made of steel or strong plastic measuring 60 x 30 cm x 2cm deep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may need to give notice in the following situations:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If works are needed to build structures to house grit stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If machines are needed to do the work or new access routes are necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If the work involves creating mounds that are more than 50cm (around 18&quot;) higher than the surrounding vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The above list is not exhaustive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2) Grit stations are set out on moorlands according to GWCT guidelines of 1kg of grit every 100m within a grid format.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If grit stations are to be set out a higher density, go to Checklist 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3) The grit stations are topped up on foot or by vehicle in such a way that this does not cause damage to sensitive habitats and locations of sensitive species.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice may need to be given if vehicles are used of a type that is likely to cause damage to the vegetation or rutting /disturbance to soils/peat. If so, you should specify the type of vehicle used and ensure it will do the least damage to the soil structure and vegetation. You will also need to supply a map showing the route and the expected frequency of use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4) The grit stations are sited and designed to avoid the risk of discharge of any active ingredients in medicated grit into the wider environment and are not situated upon saturated surfaces and locations where the medicated grit may contaminate small bodies of standing water, watercourses or ground water.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may need to give notice if the grit stations risk discharging to a watercourse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Grit Stations Checklist 2

Work through this checklist to help design and locate your grit stations. If your work follows the notes in the checklist, there is a strong likelihood that you will obtain SSSI consent, and quickly.

Tick the box if you have considered and followed the guidance, and provide a location map. The worked example should help you in this process. Once completed, submit this checklist and any supporting information to Natural England.

1) **Number and distribution**

Set out how many grit stations are planned and their distribution.

Grit stations can be set out on moorlands according to GWCT guidelines of 1kg of grit every 100m within a grid format but Natural England reserves the right to assess significance on a case by case basis.

2) **Location**

Indicate where the grit stations are to be located.

Please provide a clear indication of the number of grit stations required and where they will be located. You should provide a rough location map but this does not need to show each station.

The grit stations should avoid sensitive habitats. By placing grit stations on habitats that are less susceptible to damage - such as areas of dry heath or acid grassland, there is less likelihood of damage from any vehicles or machinery needed for their construction.

### The grit stations should be sited and designed to avoid the risk of discharge of any active ingredients in medicated grit into the wider environment and should not be situated upon saturated surfaces and locations where the medicated grit may contaminate small bodies of standing water, watercourses or ground water.

The use of medicated grit and its potential impact on the human food chain is regulated by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Its safe and proper use is therefore subject to approval from the VMD.

### The grit stations should be located to avoid scarce or sensitive species as set out below.

Particular consideration should be given to the location of scarce or sensitive species. These must be avoided when identifying the location of an individual grit station. For example, Sphagnum-rich areas are much more sensitive than heather dominated areas. Please use your Natural England advisor to help identify any species of particular interest on your land.

3) **Construction**

Set out how the grit stations are to be constructed and laid out on site.

Specify if machines are needed to do the work and how, or new access routes are necessary. Note access may already be covered by an existing consent.

4) **Maintenance**

Describe how the grit stations will be replenished. Access by vehicles as shown on the map should be designed so as not to cause damage to sensitive habitats.

- The grit stations are topped up on foot or by vehicle in such a way so that they do not cause damage to sensitive habitats and locations of sensitive species.
- Additional considerations by Natural England may be required if vehicles are used of a type that is likely to cause damage to the vegetation or rutting/disturbance to soils/peat. Therefore, please specify the type of vehicle used and ensure it will do the least damage to the soil structure and vegetation. You will also need to supply a map showing the route and the expected frequency of use.
### Grit Stations Checklist 2 continued...

#### 5) Timing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In line with normal practice, the replenishment of grit stations will avoid disturbance to breeding birds and all vehicles will only use approved routes during this time.</th>
<th>☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- If using a vehicle, avoid wet conditions as this is likely to result in significant ground disturbance. Avoid (as is normal practice) 1 April and 20 June as red grouse and other ground nesting birds will be nesting and are likely to be sitting on eggs or brooding young chicks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6) Historic Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have checked that the grit stations are not located near or on any historic sites.</th>
<th>☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Moorland habitats often have a historic environment interest. Although not covered by nature conservation designations, ensure that you have sought advice and confirm that there are no impacts in the historic environment from your activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Worked Example: Grit Stations

Showing how grit stations can be shown to have a neutral environmental impact by following Checklist 1

**Use of a series of grit stations on Middle Moor Estate, (shown in green on the attached plan).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers and location</th>
<th>The grit stations will be located on areas of acid grassland and dry heath wherever possible. When placing grit stations on blanket bog, avoid areas with sensitive <em>Sphagnum</em> dominated vegetation or scarce species.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Grit stations will be plastic double-lidded boxes with no excavations required. Occasionally a hand cut turf may be dug for siting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post construction</td>
<td>Vehicle use associated will be restricted to low pressure vehicles and will use established tracks where possible. Replenishment of grit stations will avoid wet periods so that there is no adverse impact on soils or vegetation through rutting, exposure of carbon-rich soils or damage to vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other considerations</td>
<td>Grit stations will be located appropriately to avoid Historic Environment features such as mine spoil heaps. Advice was sought and received from the National Park Archaeologist (reference to letter of 01/1/1900).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grit Stations: Best Practice
Shooting Butts and Hurdles

Summary

Grouse butts and hurdles are essential for managing grouse. Natural England considers that proposals for shooting butts on a designated nature conservation site such as SSSI, SPA and SAC\(^4\) fall within one or more operations listed on the relevant SSSI notification papers and so will need permission, or Consent, under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. If the checklist in this section is followed and you talk to your Natural England advisor at an early stage, getting a decision should be a relatively quick and easy process.

The general principles in this section may also be used for non-designated sites. As such, it represents best practice measures to ensure that the natural environment is protected and so that moorland businesses can operate smoothly.

Context

Grouse shooting butts and hurdles are a part of the moorland landscape, mainly in the northern uplands. Their purpose is to provide concealment to the Gun from grouse that are driven until they are in range. The design of a grouse butt can vary from a wooden hurdle to the more traditional stone butt, which can be a straight length of wall or almost a complete circle, sometimes sunken into the ground. Less formal lines are often marked with a peg in the ground.

Shooting butts are usually placed in a straight line about 35-50 metres apart to reduce the risks of accidents. Usually the base of the butt is drained or surfaced to provide a safe shooting platform. There are usually about ten butts in a line to allow flexibility to move the guns up or down the line depending on weather conditions.

---

4 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Special Protection Area (SPA); Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
The placement of butts is determined by the flight lines of grouse, for example to take into account the prevailing wind and because grouse moor managers wish to provide a range of shooting experiences for the client. Sometimes, in order to investigate how feasible a new line is, putting up temporary structures is a sensible option, before going to the expense of building a line of stone butts.

**Impacts**

When considering a new line of grouse butts or hurdles or altering existing lines, the direct and indirect impacts of construction should be taken into account. These are outlined in the checklist. In certain cases, dependent on location and construction methods, butts may have limited or no impact. However, special attention will be required when considering their location on sensitive habitats, or where there is a rich historic environment interest.

If you design your shooting butts and provide a location map following the principles laid out in the checklist, then Natural England should be able to grant consent quickly.

---

**Shooting Butts Checklist**

Work through this checklist to help design and locate the shooting butts(s).

If your work follows the notes in the checklist, there is a strong likelihood that you will obtain SSSI consent, and quickly.

You will **not** usually need to submit notice for the maintenance of existing butts or hurdles.

Tick the box if you have considered and followed the guidance, and provide a location map. The worked example should help you in this process. Once completed, submit this checklist and any supporting information to Natural England.

1. **Location and number of butts**

   A map at a scale of no smaller than 1:10,000 to show the location of the line of butts and number of them, including a GPS referenced point for the location of each butt has been provided.

   - The Shooting Butts should be located to avoid sensitive features. If you wish to place the shooting butts on a sensitive feature you will need to provide a general description of the vegetation along the corridor of the line of butts and a description of the vegetation type of the footprint of each butt and how they will be accessed.

2. **Shooting Butt Construction**

   Set out how the shooting butts will be constructed, following the points set out below.

   - **Use of imported stone or other materials**;
     - This should be of an appropriate type to that used locally (same pH). Limestone is not considered suitable for use on deep peat areas due to the contrasting pH of the rock and peat. Consider both walls and base. If helpful, give further details about the construction. For example is it made of timber or stone and what is the impact on adjacent peat.

   - **Drainage**;
     - New drainage is very likely to be damaging to designated peatland habitats so should be avoided.

   - **Use and storage materials**;
     - Materials are used immediately, or stored temporarily without destroying the underlying vegetation and away from designated features.
     - The following questions may help guide you further:
       - Is the vegetation to be removed, by hand or mechanical means? If mechanical, describe the machinery to be used.
       - How is the vegetation to be stored and re-utilised? Mire vegetation is sensitive, often containing peat forming species. It is important that this vegetation is managed carefully.
Shooting Butts Checklist continued...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of replacement turves;</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These should be cut from the adjacent area and be from the same non-sensitive habitats;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disturbance to vegetation caused during construction;</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disturbed areas should be re-instated with the same vegetation type (Turves from the footprint of the butt should be carefully stored for later use). The following questions may guide you in the information you submit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you considered re-vegetation around the butt, adjacent bare peat areas or drains?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is the turf for reinstatement viable? Consider depth of soil/peat attached to turf.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are the butts to sit on the surface, semi- or fully sunken?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How is any soil not used to be removed from site?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access by vehicles during construction;</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are vehicles required to transport materials? If so consider impact on the soils and vegetation. They should not cause rutting or damage to vegetation in adjacent areas. There should be no new tracks or upgrades to existing tracks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Historic Environment

I have checked that the shooting butts are not located near or on any historic sites.

| Moorland habitats often have a historic environment interest. Although not covered by nature conservation designations, ensure that you have sought advice and confirm that there are no impacts in the historic environment from your activities. |  |

4) Aftercare

Consider post construction measures to protect peat soils.

| The method of construction of the works should not expose areas of peat and this should be monitored after the works are complete. When working on peat substrates it is important to minimise the time that bare peat surfaces are exposed to the air. There should no bare peat surface remaining as a result of the works. Ensure that all turves are used to vegetate any bare surfaces. If any bare surfaces remain then consider using an approved seed mix to re-vegetate these areas. |  |

5) Intensification of management

I have provided a description of how these new shooting butts will affect the management of the site as set out below.

| Describe how the construction of a new line of butts will affect your management. |  |
| Natural England is required to consider not just the impact of the butts but also any impact from the use of the butts. For example, is a change to the agreed burning plan required around the butts? |  |
| Take account of burning in the location of the butts. Natural England is unlikely to consent an increased frequency of burning on sensitive bog habitats adjacent to new butts. |  |
| Consider future access to the butts. Vehicle use should avoid sensitive areas as they can result in rutting and exposure of peat or damage to the vegetation. |  |
| Proposals for new tracks on deep peat are unlikely to be considered favourably. Natural England has developed guidance on new tracks and deep peat. |  |
Worked Example: Shooting Butts
Showing how a Notice for new shooting butts can be shown to have a neutral environmental impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location and Number</th>
<th>There will be a new line of grouse butts (total of 10 new butts) along the route shown in blue on the attached plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Each grouse butt will be of a stone construction and sunken into the ground. Where possible materials from existing, redundant butt lines (shown by the pink line on the attached plan) will be re-used to create new butts. All additional materials will be brought to the location using a suitable vehicle which avoids adverse impact on soils or vegetation through rutting, exposure of carbon-rich soils or damage to vegetation. Vehicles will access the butts along existing metalled routes as shown on the attached plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigation measures</td>
<td>1. For each grouse butt, a mini digger will excavate the heather/grass turves and soil and these will be placed to one side and carefully stored for future use. The grouse butts will be sunken into the ground. 2. Soil will be replaced around the excavation or used to assist in the restoration of the redundant butt line. Any surplus soil will be removed from site. 3. Heather or grass turves will be replaced around each of the grouse butts to re-instate any bare surfaces used to cap the butts, or used to re-vegetate bare surfaces along the redundant butt line. 4. Construction will avoid wet periods so that there is no adverse impact on soils or vegetation through rutting, exposure of carbon-rich soils or damage to vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>There is no requirement for associated drainage due to the free draining nature of the soil/substrate. Any residual disturbed ground created during the works (including along the redundant butt line) will be re-vegetated using heather brash or a heather or grass seed mix which replicates the vegetation of the surrounding area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post construction</td>
<td>The construction of new grouse butts in this case will not result in any intensification of management through changes either to the agreed burning plan or through new access proposals. Future vehicle access to the butts will be on existing metalled tracks so no rutting, exposure of carbon-rich soils or damage to vegetation will result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other considerations</td>
<td>Historic environment features have been taken into account and there will be no impact on them. The proposal, either through construction, use or maintenance of the butts, will not affect any areas identified as sensitive on the moorland management plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worked Example: Middle Moor Estate Map
Decision Tree - Shooting Butts, Hurdles and SSSI Consent

1. Is your proposal maintenance of butts or hurdles?
   - **YES**
     - Consent is unlikely to be required.
   - **NO**

2. Is your proposal an upgrade of existing butts, or new butts/hurdles?
   - **YES**
     - Consent will be required.
   - **NO**

3. Does your proposal affect non-sensitive habitats?
   - **YES**
     - Consent is likely to be granted if the principles in the adjacent box are set out in a simple notice and followed.
   - **NO**

4. Does your proposal affect sensitive habitats/species?
   - **YES**
     - Proposals will require careful consideration. The type of materials, construction methodology etc need to be set out in a detailed notice.
     - Consent for proposals affecting these habitats will be carefully considered.
   - **NO**

5. Is your proposal for temporary hurdles?
   - Provided the guidance set out for non-sensitive and sensitive habitats is followed consent is likely to be granted. Giving Notice to Natural England is still required.

**Maintenance means:**
- The footprint of the butts is not increased;
- Existing stones are used;
- Hand tools are used;
- Replacement turves are cut from the immediate area.

The list of Operations Likely to Damage (OLD) for your SSSI usually will not include maintenance of butts or hurdles. Please check first and if in doubt consult your local Natural England adviser.

**Non-sensitive habitat**
- Imported stone or other materials is of an appropriate type to that used locally (same pH);
- There is no new drainage;
- Materials are stored away from designated features;
- Access by vehicles for construction would not cause rutting or damage to vegetation in adjacent areas;
- There are no new tracks or upgrades to existing tracks;
- Replacement turves are cut from the adjacent area and are the same non-sensitive habitats;
- Any disturbance to vegetation caused during construction would be re-instated with the same vegetation type (Turves from the footprint of the butt should be carefully stored for later use).

**Sensitive habitats**
- In addition to the principles set out for non-sensitive habitats the following should be observed:
  - The pH of imported stone or other materials should reflect that of the adjacent substrate, for example acid stone on peat;
  - Any drainage should not affect the hydrological integrity of the peatland. In practice any drainage is likely to be restricted to the immediate vicinity of the butt. Consider whether you need to sink the butt or whether it can be located on a slope. This may reduce any drainage requirements;
  - Materials should not be stored on sensitive features;

Complete the checklist so that we have the correct information to enable a quick response. We will aim to make a response well within our normal response period of 28 days.
Shooting Butts: Best Practice
Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England’s traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

Catalogue Code: NE503


www.naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England publications are available as accessible pdfs from: www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0845 600 3078 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

This publication is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions. For details of the licence visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright

Natural England photographs are only available for non-commercial purposes. If any other information, such as maps or data, cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the publication.

© Natural England 2014