

23rd June 2026

Our ref: SFI Consenting Communications June 2026

Your ref: None



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Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) – Consent requirements on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) land

Dear Owner/Occupier,

Following the re-opening of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) in 2026, you are receiving this letter because you have applied for, or may be applying for, an agreement on land that falls within a SSSI.

We want to help you get everything right the first-time so your agreement and payments are not delayed.

Natural England can only consent **specific management activities**, not SFI action titles.

Why consent matters

SSSIs are legally protected, and some farming activities require written consent from Natural England before you begin. This is separate from your SFI agreement, which doesn't automatically grant consent.

Getting consent early means your payments are protected and your land continues to thrive. Working without consent can lead to enforcement action and delayed or lost SFI payments.

If you already hold consent for your planned activities that covers your full agreement period, you don't need to apply again.

How we can help

To help you get consent please follow the help and guidance outlined below:

1. Check whether your land is an SSSI using [MAGIC](#) or the [Designated Sites System \(DSS\)](#).
2. Review the Operations Requiring Natural England's Consent (ORNECS) list for your SSSI.
3. For each [SFI action](#), ask:
 - will any of my planned management appear on the ORNECS list? If yes, you need consent.
4. Apply using the [Online Consent Portal at GOV.UK](#) — search "Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land."

N.B. Please submit your notice after your SFI application, so it accurately reflects your planned management and keep a note of your Notice Form reference number for future correspondence.

What to include in your notice

A notice should set out the **who, what, where, when and how**, including:

- owner/occupier details and SSSI name
- Your Single Business Identifier (SBI) number
- Your SFI agreement reference number
- where on the SSSI the work will take place
- what operations will be carried out and how
- timing and frequency (covering the whole SFI agreement period)
- machinery and methods, where relevant

Simply referring to SFI guidance is not sufficient.

Additional detail for some SFI Actions

Some actions (for example upland moorland options or low-input grassland) often need more detail, such as:

- stocking types, numbers and timings
- cutting or grazing regimes
- scrub, weed or supplementary feeding management

What you can expect after you submit a notice

- Natural England may request further information
- your SFI agreement cannot go live until receipt of a notice is confirmed

Please Note: payments may be delayed if consent cannot be determined (due to delays when responding to requests for additional information).

Consent will only apply to the management described in your notice. Any other work must not be carried out until further consent is obtained.

If you are unsure, please seek professional advice at an early stage.

Thank you for working with Natural England to support your land and nature recovery for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Rowley
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