Farm Environment Adviser Competency Framework – October 2021				
Competency	**What this covers**	**Competence Level**		
		Trainee *Some understanding of factors/activities underpinning farm environmental advice but limited practical experience*	**Proficient** *Able to independently deliver good, appropriate advice to deliver positive environmental outcomes in most farm/estate scenarios*	**Advanced** *Able to apply a more in-depth knowledge to further enhance environmental outcomes*
FEA1 **Farm management practice**	Application of knowledge of farming and land management systems (e.g. beef/ dairy/ hill farming/ arable/ crofting/ organic) in the geographic/regional context, types of crops/livestock present and associated management activities (including seasonal patterns/workload pressures) in order to understand drivers for farmer/land manager decision-making. Understanding of the implications of owned and tenanted farms for the farmer or land manager in terms of site-based farming practices and decision-making. Able to use this knowledge to plan approach to farmers/land	Able to recognise common farming activities on site, including main types of farming systems (e.g. beef/ dairy/ hill farming/ arable/ crofting/ /organic) and crops/livestock present. Able to demonstrate understanding of the principles of crop rotation and basic weed and pest management control practices: cultural, mechanical, preventative, biological and chemical. Able to demonstrate an understanding of alternative approaches such as regenerative agriculture, net-	As for Trainee but also able to evaluate the impact of diversification such as recreation (e.g. fishing, shooting, camping) or on-site food production (e.g. processed dairy products, pick-your-own) on environmental land management. Able to evaluate how livestock breeds and densities may vary from site to site and seasonally within sites and the implications for environmental management. Able to accurately assess the impacts of ownership of farm and farm management practices, including pest/weed control, use of fertilisers and common veterinary practices, in terms of opportunities and	As for Proficient but also able to draw on specialist in depth knowledge in one or more of the following areas: a) Agronomy b) Net-zero farming c) Agro-forestry d) Regenerative agriculture e) Conservation land management

	managers, identifying potential opportunities and conflicts and understanding the implications of the advice provided.	zero farming, mobile grazing, and agro-forestry.	constraints for environmental enhancement.	
FEA2 **Farm economics**	Application of knowledge of main sources of costs relevant to farming system to understand potential implications of environmental enhancements on costs and income. Understanding of impact of externalities (e.g. market trends, subsidies, legislation and regional and national policies) on farming practice and profitability. Application of this knowledge to the design of environmental advice.	Able to demonstrate understanding of farming as a food production business and the likely sources of costs and income/profit appropriate to the farming system. Able to use published sources of farm economic data (e.g. John Nix Pocketbook, Scottish Agricultural College Farm Management Handbook, ABC Budgeting and Costing Book).	As for Trainee but also able to evaluate and assess the impact of market trends, subsidies, grant-schemes, policies and other relevant externalities on farm/estate viability and farmer/land manager decision-making. Able to summarise the costs/benefits to the farmer/land manager of proposed environmental enhancements, recognising potential conflicts with other desired farming objectives, and to design/amend proposals accordingly. Where possible, able to make an economic case for implementation.	Not applicable
FEA3 **Finance and funding for environmental land management**	Understanding and communicating the range of current and planned sources of finance for environmental land management. Supporting farmers and land managers to access appropriate finance and funding opportunities.	Able to demonstrate a broad understanding of the current and planned principal sources of finance for environmental activities in a farmed landscape, including grants, subsidies, the concept of payment for public goods (through private finance or new agri-environment schemes such as Sustainable Farming Incentive or Farming in Protected Landscapes grants), trading and offsetting schemes	As for Trainee but also able to summarise and apply knowledge to identify an appropriate blended finance approach for the farm/farmer in the context of the desired environmental outcomes. Able to recognise and explain additional opportunities arising from local/regional/catchment-scale initiatives. Able to advise the farmer/land manager on the duration of funding	As for Proficient but also able to deliver training to groups of farmers/land managers on finance and funding opportunities, including scheme requirements and compliance.

		(e.g. Woodland Carbon Code, Peatland Code, Nitrate Trading Platform, Biodiversity Net Gain (in England only). Able to demonstrate an understanding of the scheme requirements for the most common sources of finance and funding (e.g. agri-environment schemes).	and how to comply with scheme requirements. Able to successfully assist farmers/land managers in securing funding via application and registration schemes. Able to undertake post agri-environment scheme application negotiations with the statutory and payment agencies in the relevant country if required. Able to recognise when more specialist financial/legal advice is required.	
FEA4 **Physical environment survey and resource protection**	Identifying, classifying and evaluating the influence of the physical characteristics of the site (e.g. landscape character, historical land use, soils, microclimate, hydrology, water quality, geomorphology and erosion) that affect the range and complexity of the habitats and species present and the farm management practices. Providing advice on resource protection to deliver better environmental outcomes. Undertaking biosecure physical environment surveys	Able to demonstrate knowledge of sources of desk-based information on the physical characteristics of the site and their limitations (e.g. aerial photographs, OS maps, Local Environmental Records Centres, MAGIC, Environment Map (Scotland), Environmental Data Portal (Wales), OpenData (Northern Ireland), Local Environmental Records Centres, The Land App, ArcGIS). Able to use knowledge of the area and desk-sourced data	As for Trainee but also able to use local/regional knowledge of the area to accurately predict likely farm management practices/ecological opportunities and constraints arising from the physical characteristics of the site. Able to use site-based information (both visual observation and data collection) to characterise commonly occurring physical features and processes on site according to recognised industry descriptors (e.g. soil type/fertility; degree and causes of compaction, erosion, run-off; water quality; surface water/groundwater conditions; microclimatic	As for Proficient but able to apply in depth knowledge of one or more aspects of the physical environment to plan and conduct detailed site surveys in order to provide a granular assessment of issues and opportunities. Able to prepare a cost-effective resource management plan at site-specific or landscape/catchment-scale for one or more aspects of the physical environment (e.g. nutrient management plan, soil management plan, carbon management plan).

		regarding the physical environment to prioritise objectives for and plan physical environment site surveys. Able to demonstrate understanding of importance of biosecurity when undertaking physical environment surveys. Able where necessary to collect sufficient measurements of the physical characteristics of the site using appropriate techniques and with appropriate biosecurity precautions.	variations; landscape character and impacts of historic land use). Able to identify the ecological opportunities and constraints arising from the physical characteristics of the farm/estate and make cost effective proposals for changes to farming/land management practices that can deliver environmental benefit.	
FEA5 **Habitat survey, mapping and assessment**	Identifying, classifying, mapping and assessing habitats (including habitat condition) in accordance with a recognised system of habitat classification (e.g. JNCC Phase One, UKHab, EUNIS) and at appropriate spatial scales. Using appropriate methods, such as Common Standards Monitoring, for habitat condition assessment. BETHA/FEP	Able to demonstrate knowledge of sources of desk-based information on site designations (e.g. SSSI, SAC/SPA, AONB/NPA) habitats present/likely to be present on site and their limitations (e.g. e.g. photographs, OS maps, Local Environmental Records Centres, MAGIC, Environment Map (Scotland), Environmental Data Portal (Wales), OpenData (Northern Ireland), Ancient Woodland	As for Trainee but also able to accurately recognise and classify habitats using the appropriate classification system (e.g. UKHab, EUNIS). Able to identify and record opportunities for habitat restoration/creation on site (e.g. using 'spare' land for ecological enhancement, creating buffer zones, blocking drains to create/restore wetland). Able to distinguish between habitat value and habitat condition. Able to accurately recognise indicator species and physical signs to undertake	As for Proficient but able to recognise and undertake detailed habitat survey, classification and mapping of more unusual or complex farmland habitats (e.g. ancient woodland, floodplain meadows, bogs and mires) using the National Vegetation Classification where appropriate. Able to accurately undertake condition assessment for more unusual or complex farmland habitats.

		Inventory, LandApp, ArcGIS,Trinity). Able to biosecurely undertake habitat surveys and accurately, record data and map commonly found farmland habitats using the appropriate codes for the habitat classification system used. Able to recognise something unusual where additional help may be required.	condition assessment for common farmland habitats (e.g. bare ground, plant vigour, etc).	
FEA6 **Species survey and identification**	Application of knowledge of species ecology and distribution and information from desk-based surveys to set appropriate objectives for farm wildlife surveys for one or more taxonomic groups (e.g. flowering plants, birds, mammals, butterflies, amphibians). Identifying the most appropriate times and techniques for surveying and the types of data and data capture methods to be used. Fieldwork skills including planning, selection and use of equipment for survey and recording. Species identification and evaluation for one or more taxonomic groups.	Able to demonstrate knowledge of sources of desk-based information on the species present on the site and the local area (e.g. Local Environmental Records Centres, NBN Atlases, MAGIC, Environment Map (Scotland), Environmental Data Portal (Wales), OpenData (Northern Ireland)). Able to demonstrate understanding of the limitations of such data Able to undertake biosecure surveys in accordance with recognised good practice standards, using appropriate	As for Trainee but also able to accurately anticipate the common plant species likely to be found based on interpretation of desk-study data, the physical characteristics of the site and habitats present, geographical location and prior knowledge of farming practices. Able to accurately identify the common plants, r likely to be associated with the habitats found on site. May be able to identify one or more additional taxonomic groups (e.g. birds, butterflies, mammals, amphibians) or less common plant species to family or genus level. Able to recognise commonly found invasive non-native species.	As for Proficient level but can also identify less common species within one or more taxonomic fields (e.g. vascular plants, pollinators, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, freshwater invertebrates)

		equipment and data capture methods. Able to identify some of the most common plant species associated with the most common farmland habitats.		
FEA7 Technology	Application of sufficient knowledge of IT and GIS (e.g. The Land App, ArcGIS) systems to access, interrogate, and use them effectively and to upkeep data quality and standards.	Able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of clean GIS data in the design and delivery of environmental advice and accurate record keeping. Able to use GIS technology and survey data to generate a Baseline Habitat Assessment in appropriate language (e.g. UKHab) displaying an accurate representation of reality. Able to draw new features including buffers, hedgerows and ponds accurately.	As for Trainee but also able to produce a 'clean' habitat map, where no mapped polygon features overlap one-another and the entire project area is accurately coded. Able to demonstrate use of available data layers, including satellite imagery, designations and targeting, to make better informed decisions. Able to spatially map proposed and implemented land management interventions. Able to concatenate, export and share GIS data.	As for Proficient but also able to facilitate multiple holdings GIS data to help inform landscape - scale nature recovery.
FEA8 Environmental assessment	Providing an assessment of the current and potential environmental value of the farm/estate and opportunities for enhancement in the context of local, regional and national conservation initiatives. Able to use an ecosystem services approach to identify environmental resources, impacts and	Able to define and identify sources of good practice guidance in environmental assessment. Able to summarise knowledge of relevant local, regional and national nature conservation initiatives (such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Resilient	As for Trainee but also able to determine the likely impacts of potential environmental enhancements, identifying potential cross-taxa conflicts or conflicts with other environmental objectives and solutions. Able to assess the opportunities for on-site environmental enhancements to contribute to local and regional conservation initiative objectives and	As for Proficient but also able to undertake an ecosystem services assessment for single site or group/clusters of farms at a landscape or catchment-scale and using appropriate calculator tools.

	dependencies as part of the decision-making process.	Ecological Networks, Catchment Sensitive Farming). Able to demonstrate a basic understanding of ecosystem services and their application in a farmed landscape.	the implications for identifying opportunities. Able to identify and gather the data required for site-based ecosystem services assessment and undertake an assessment using an appropriate calculator tool.	
FEA9 **Interpretation and reporting**	Interpreting outcomes from habitat/species surveys and combining with an understanding of farm management opportunities and constraints to produce reports and recommendations.	Able to identify sources of good practice guidance in reporting findings and recommendations to farmers/land managers. Able to interpret simple/straightforward reports and produce appropriate conclusions. Able to demonstrate awareness of the importance of supplying data to the NBN/species recording schemes/LERCS.	As for Trainee but able to use collate and analyse data to produce clear, concise and factual reports and maps with a level of detail appropriate for the audience (e.g. farmer, funder) appropriately justifying conclusions and recommendations based on the evidence provided. Able to use appropriate mapping software (e.g. The Land App) to produce maps to an appropriate standard.	As for Proficient but able to use software packages such as The Land App or ArcGIS to collate data and produce accessible reports at a landscape or catchment-scale. Able, with the necessary approvals, to summarise the findings for publication at a local/regional or national scale as case studies or as evidence for decision makers.
FEA10 **Providing advice on habitat/species management and /or habitat creation**	Providing evidence-based technical advice to farmers and land managers on habitat creation and restoration, including ongoing management requirements. Providing advice in the context of funding opportunities, resource requirements, local/ regional/ national habitat and species priorities and climate change	Able to demonstrate an understanding of the most common farmland habitat and species requirements and the evidence base to support this. Able to demonstrate an understanding of the potential for applying nature-based and natural process-led solutions in a farmland context and their	As for Trainee but also able to advise on appropriate habitat creation/management techniques for common farmland habitats (grassland, woodland, hedgerows, streams/ditches) and species appropriate to the geographic area and farming system. Able to include appropriate advice on	As for Proficient but also able to demonstrate detailed knowledge of habitat management, creation and restoration techniques, for one or more less-common habitats and species and/or using specialist such as ancient woodland management,

	adaptation (including use of nature-based solutions).	value in terms of carbon management and climate change adaptation.	management/control of invasive non-native species. Able to use an understanding of which habitats and species on site are a priority at a local/regional and national scale to tailor advice and manage cross-taxa conflicts whilst also promoting a landscape-scale ecological network. Able to advise on options to deliver multiple ecological benefits including adaptation to climate change through the use of nature-based and natural process-led solutions and provide clear objectives to assess effectiveness of the delivery options in the long term. Able to recognise when more specialist advice is required.	conservation grazing, river restoration, etc. Able to use in depth knowledge to provide specialist advice on sustainable farming approaches such as carbon management planning, regenerative agriculture and agro-forestry.
FEA11 **Design and preparation of land management plans**	Collecting and scrutinising all relevant information in order to establish baselines and set objectives for habitat/species management and enhancement plans. Designing effective sustainable environmental management solutions for biodiversity and wider environmental benefit including adaptive management strategies to combat climate change and nature-	Able to use available information to establish an ecological baseline and set appropriate environmental objectives for common farmland habitats and species.	As for Trainee but able to design pragmatic, proportionate land management plans for common farmland habitats and species appropriate to the geographic area, the farming system and local/regional/national priority habitats and species. Able to produce plans that are accessible to the farmer/land manager whilst also meeting the needs of any funding organisation. Able to design schemes that are both adaptive to a changing climate and	As for Proficient but also for less common habitats and species and/or at a landscape-scale as part of promoting a wider ecological network. May also be able to draw up detailed plans for specialised habitat management techniques, such as woodland management, conservation grazing, river restoration, etc. Alternatively, may be able to use in depth knowledge to

	based solutions to mitigate climate change effects. Identifying and resolving complex or conflicting constraints to achieve positive outcomes for biodiversity. Designing appropriate schemes to monitor management outcomes and planning for remedial actions where these may be required.		take opportunities to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, e.g. through the use of nature-based and natural process-led solutions, efficient carbon management and maintenance of on-site ecosystem services. Able to produce plans that take account of externalities such as the costs/availability of the machinery, tools and materials (e.g. specific wildflower seed mixes) required, the commitment of the farmer/land manager for ongoing management, other economic priorities for the farm/estate and sources of funding/finance. Able to design low-cost monitoring schemes, utilising volunteer effort where possible (including the farmer/land manager) and provide an appropriate level of training for implementation.	produce more detailed plans to underpin wider sustainable farming approaches such as a carbon management plan.
FEA12 Environmental land management legislation, regulation and policy	Providing advice and encouragement to farmers in both interpreting and applying current environmental legislation, policy and/or standards in order to ensure a high level of compliance.	Able to explain the current relevant farm regulatory requirements and legislation e.g. cutting hedgerows, protection of waterways from run-off and waste management. Able to identity the relevant country agricultural policy and its implications in respect of	As for Trainee but also able to identify poor farm practices and sensitively raise issues with farmers / land managers to remediate issues an ensure compliance.	As for Proficient but able to provide training to groups of farmers on country-specific environmental legislation, regulation and policy and its implications, both in terms of opportunities and constraints.

		achieving positive environmental outcomes (e.g, Sustainable Farming Incentive standards).		
FEA13 **Effective communication, negotiation and influencing**	Building relationships with farmers and landowners. Establishing credibility and trust. Communicating key information to farmers and land managers using appropriate language. Able to successfully advocate for changes to land management practices to benefit wildlife whilst taking into account farm business practices and farm economics. Using negotiation and influencing skills to promote acceptance of ideas and proposals.	Able to use appropriate language and relevant knowledge to communicate with farmers and land managers, demonstrating insight into their farming practices and pressures. Able to recognise and acknowledge farmers own experience and expertise.	As for Trainee but also able to demonstrate empathy with farmers and land managers as owners/managers of businesses. Able to demonstrate understanding of the range of motivations for participation in environmental land management, the starting point in terms of understanding/willingness to engage and adapt content and communication style appropriately. Able to present information using a range of formats and media that are easy to understand according to the farmer/land manager's communication preferences. Able to build effective relationships and use negotiation skills to address conflicts arising from desired environmental objectives and other farm-related objectives and to influence decision-making and engagement.	As for Proficient but also able to deliver training to groups of farmers and land managers that demonstrably lead to changes in farming practices/take up of environmental objectives. Able to recognise and utilise the benefits of peer-to-peer interactions (encouragement and knowledge-sharing).
FE14 **Customer care**	Understanding the farmer/land manager's objectives in engaging with you and ensuring your work significantly contributes to achieving those objectives.	Demonstrating understanding of the importance of the farmer/land manager's interactions with you being a	As for Trainee but also demonstrating a good understanding of how the farmer/land manager's needs and priorities might have changed over time/according to circumstances. Able to adapt approach appropriate	As for Proficient but also able to work at a group/cluster level, integrating individual needs and priorities into a collective approach and ensuring advice is delivered appropriate to the

	Ensuring the farmer/land manager has a positive experience through their interaction with you.	positive experience and how this can go wrong. Able to listen and to extract information to identify the farmer/land manager's needs and priorities in accessing your advice. Able to review the advice/support provided against those needs and priorities.	to the farmer/land manager's current personal/business circumstances. Able to demonstrate good follow-up or aftercare to ensure the farmer/land manager's objectives are met and they have the support they need to implement the proposed actions. Able to help problem solve where intended actions/outcomes are not being met. Able to recognise signs of pressure/mental ill health and take appropriate action to signpost the farmer/land manager to appropriate help.	collective objectives whilst also ensuring that individual needs/priorities are met. Whilst working at the group/cluster level, flexing your approach to take account of changes in an individual's personal/business circumstances that need to be accommodated, either temporarily or permanently, whilst seeking adjustments elsewhere amongst other group/cluster members.
FEA15 **Health and safety**	Demonstrating a positive approach to health, safety and wellbeing in a farm environment and complying with both relevant legislation and good farm practice.	Able to demonstrate awareness of health and safety risks in a farm environment, both for self and others.	As for Trainee but also able to undertake risk assessments, identify appropriate actions and implement them to avoid and manage risks. Able to advise others on likely health and safety risks during on-site advisory visits.	Not applicable in this context
FEA16 **Professional conduct**	Demonstrating a good understanding of, and adherence to relevant good practice standards and demonstrating appropriate ethical behaviours.	Able to demonstrate awareness of relevant good practice guidance and standards. Able to demonstrate understanding of the importance of career-long Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to	As for Trainee but able to demonstrate adherence to good practice standards and using best endeavours to maximise the environmental benefits from your advice whilst supporting the farmer/land manager to implement your recommendations.	Not applicable

		stay up-to-date with latest thinking and evidence to inform advice and decision-making.	Undertaking regular relevant CPD in order to maintain your knowledge and skills.	