

8.3 Reinstatement of Sod Banks

Definition: Earthen banks or sod banks, as they are locally known, form the basis of boundaries mainly on the higher areas of Northern Ireland where hedgerows could not grow. These banks now often contain an interesting vegetation and on some farms, they may be the only surviving areas of semi-natural grasslands.

The banks generally contain a core of stones cleared from the land with a covering layer of sod derived from the adjacent ditch. The ratio of sod to stone and construction techniques vary but when reinstating banks they should be constructed as per a cross section of the existing sod bank using both stone and sod from the immediate area (see diagram below). New sod banks are not eligible for grant.

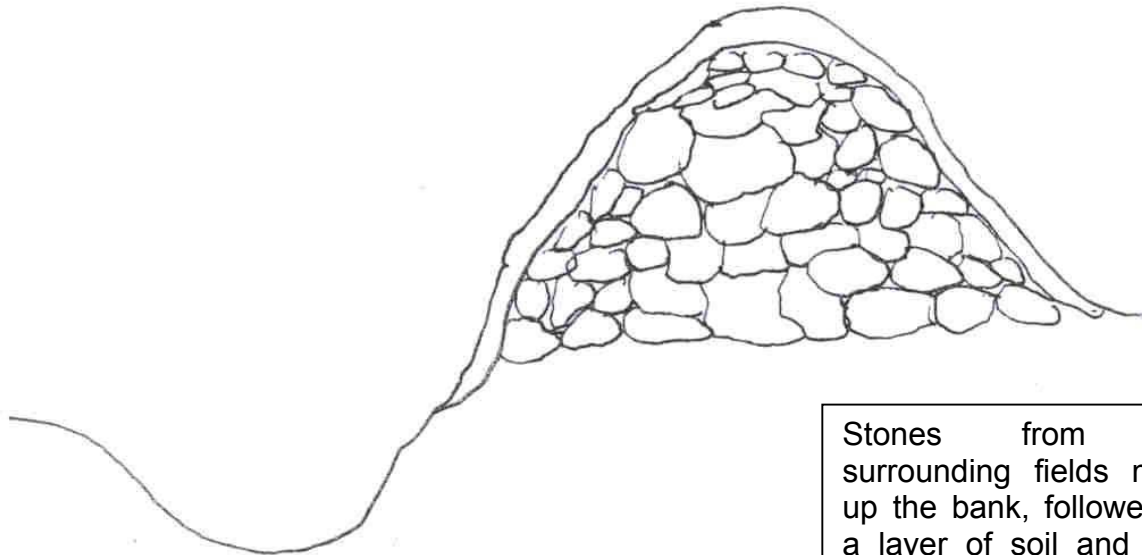
In most cases the core of the bank will be made of local stone, then a layer of sod lifted from the associated ditch should be placed over the stone to give a similar shape as the existing bank allowing some leeway for shrinkage. Cattle or sheep may need to be excluded from the area using an electric fence until the sods have knitted together.

Aim: to maintain the structure, landscape patterns and biodiversity of field boundaries in the countryside through the implementation of a 5-year field boundary management plan through the reinstatement of sod banks.

Management requirements:

- The removal of sod banks is not permitted unless approved in writing by DARD.
- All sod bank reinstatement must follow the exact line and contours of the original field boundary.
- Sod banks must be built in accordance with the best standards, traditions and designs of the district, based on the diagram below, and to a standard judged acceptable by DARD.
- Reinstated sod banks must not exceed the traditional height for such features in the locality.
- Land reclamation to obtain stone is not permitted.

Cross-section of a traditional earthen bank. Sods should be placed on the bank with grass side up.



Stones from the surrounding fields make up the bank, followed by a layer of soil and then sods are placed on the constructed bank

Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)

Note: Consent must be obtained from the Environment & Heritage Service (EHS), Department of the Environment before any works are carried out within or along an ASSI boundary. The EHS contact telephone number for further information is 028 9054 6595.

Management plans are provided for participants in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes

