

Agricultural Development Scheme

LAND CLASSIFICATION: ABOVE AND BELOW THE MOUNTAIN LINE

All fields of agricultural land in the Isle of Man have been classified as either Above or Below the Mountain Line and this classification affects both the value of the flat rate area payment and Front Loading payment.

Definitions of land classes on the Isle of Man

During the summer of 2008, the Department contracted SAC (Scottish Agriculture College) to undertake work to produce a definition of land classes for agricultural land in the Isle of Man, prior to the introduction of payments based on eligible land area. This was needed as it was recognised that land management costs vary across the Island and it was felt that payments should reflect this.



The results of the work were used as the basis for a Land Classification Policy, published as Government Circular No 64/08, which can be downloaded from the Agricultural Development Scheme website.

The Department's Officers will use the criteria detailed in the SAC Land Classification Handbook to determine the classification of land parcels and to review the decisions against which an appeal has been lodged. This Handbook can be downloaded from the DEFA website.

Land **Above the Mountain Line** is defined as:

1. All land of mountain moorland character that is at and above 200m altitude plus land below 200m which has the same characteristics and which is contiguous with land of mountain moorland character above 200m; or
2. Areas exceeding 50 acres (20ha) below the 200m contour but of mountain moorland character will be classified as Above the Mountain Line. Examples of such areas are parts of the Point of Ayre, Calf of Man, Peel Hill and Bradda Head.

Land **Below the Mountain Line** is defined as:

1. Areas of land which are not of mountain moorland character as set out above plus enclosed improved or semi-improved grassland which covers more than 10 acres but which are surrounded by land of mountain moorland character.
2. Land contiguous with that of mountain moorland character which has 50% or more improved or semi-improved grassland or where liming or fertilising has had a significant impact on the vegetation.
3. Areas below the 200m contour but of mountain moorland character and less than 50 acres in extent will be considered to be Below the Mountain Line – examples of these include parts of Barony Head, Meayll Hill and Maughold Head.



The determination of “mountain moorland character” is dependent primarily on the species found in the sward. However, there were areas where the boundary between mountain moorland character and improved grassland was not clear cut, for example, where land was reverting to moorland or which had been invaded by species such as gorse or bracken. For these areas, the assessment of their land class also took into account evidence of management practices including liming or manuring (both in the past and the present) and the proportion of species indicative of agricultural improvement compared to those indicative of moorland.

