

Rural Development: Agri-Environment Climate Scheme full guidance

Full guidance and rules for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme

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1 Introduction

Date published: 11 October, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

The Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is a competitive scheme that promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's magnificent natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and mitigate and adapt to climate change.

It will also help to improve public access and preserve historic sites.

Funding will be available between 2015 and 2020 to fund a range of activities that help to maintain and enhance our rich and varied natural environment.

This funding will help to:

- deliver the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity by supporting appropriate management for vulnerable and iconic species and habitats, strengthening ecological networks, controlling invasive non-native species and enhancing the condition of protected nature sites
- contribute to Scotland's world-leading climate change targets by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and securing carbon stores in peatlands and other organic soils
- meet obligations to improve water quality under the EU Water Framework Directive by reducing diffuse pollution
- control flooding through natural flood risk management
- support organic farming
- preserve the historic environment
- improve public access

The scheme will be delivered jointly by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) of the Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

Seeking advice

A case officer will be assigned to your project once you have formally submitted your application.

However, if you have any questions or concerns about the scheme before then and you need further clarification, you may find it helpful to contact your local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or Scottish Natural Heritage office.

[Rural Payments and Inspections Division contacts](#)

[Scottish Natural Heritage contacts](#)

If you are considering options that require advice on the management of Scheduled Monuments, you should get in touch with Historic Environment Scotland.

[Historic Environment Scotland](#)

Section	Change
Introduction	A total of £350 million has been replaced with the word funding

Previous versions

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2 Eligibility

Date published: 10 October, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Introduction

The scheme is open to farmers, groups of farmers and other land managers with land in Scotland who are registered with us and have a Business Reference Number (BRN).

[You can find out how to register here](#)

You must be able to demonstrate that you are able, and have the legal right, to carry out the projects to be funded on the land included in your application for the length of the contract and any associated monitoring period.

Funding under this scheme cannot be used to support works that you are required to complete as part of a statutory or legislative obligation, you cannot include any options or items in your application that you have a duty to complete or which you have already started work on (including the purchase of any associated items or equipment) before being notified that the application has been successful and a confirmatory authority to start work letter has been issued to you.

Additionally, funding must not be used where the work proposed has already, partly or fully, secured funding from another source.

Not all the categories of applicants referred to will be eligible to apply for all options or activities under the scheme. For example, applications for the Organic Conversion and Organic Maintenance options are only open to farmers and crofters.

Separate eligibility requirements will also apply to applications for the [Improving Public Access](#) option. (Note: The Improving Public Access option will not be reopening for new applications in 2019 following a record number of high quality applications in 2018).

You should therefore refer to the specific eligibility requirements found in the individual management options and capital item sections of the guidance.

[Check options and items](#)

The questions case officers are to answer in 2019, to check the applicant's eligibility to apply to the scheme, is provided here.



[AGRI-ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE SCHEME APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST QUESTIONS \(PDF, Size: 126.9 kB\)](#)

Application Eligibility Checklist

Please also refer to the [Double funding and option incompatibility](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Introduction	New application check list for 2019
Introduction	New application check list for 2018 and info on double funding and option incompatibility
Introduction	Content changed to show the case officer questions are relevant to 2016 rather than 2017

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3 Occupancy of land

Date published: 18 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Introduction

To apply to the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, you must either own and occupy the land, have a secure tenancy, have a contractual licence or be a grazing clerk submitting an application on behalf of a grazing committee.

If you have a contractual licence you are eligible to apply for capital items only.

You must be able to demonstrate that you have the legal right to carry out the projects to be funded on the land included in your application for the length of the contract and any associated monitoring period.

If you are a landlord or an owner/occupier you can apply for land that is managed in hand or let out on a seasonal basis only. If any land included in the application is let out on a seasonal basis, it will be your responsibility to ensure that all scheme requirements are met.

Tenancies

If you are a non-croft tenant or official sub-tenant of a croft, it is your responsibility to discuss the proposed application with your landlord or main tenant to make sure it does not break the conditions of your tenancy.

You must be able to demonstrate a legal right to carry out the proposed management to be funded on the land included in your application for the full length of a five-year contract under this scheme.

If you propose to apply for capital items, your rights must last for the associated monitoring period, which is five years from the final payment for a capital item.

In order to demonstrate this you must submit with your application, either:

- a signed Landlord Declaration Form (see below) in which your landlord or main tenant confirms that the lease extends beyond the required duration, or
- a copy of the lease

If you elect to submit a lease that has already been submitted to RPID for another purpose, this will only be acceptable provided you make sure that the lease meets the AECS requirements.

You must also make sure that sufficient details are entered in the proof of secure tenancy section of the online AECS application to alert the case officer of this request. This should be information on the lease's earlier submission and that it is also to be used for this scheme.



[Landlord declaration form \(PDF, Size: 155.3 kB\)](#)

Contractual licences (third-party applications)

If you are not a landowner or tenant, you can apply to do capital works on land covered by a contractual licence. However, applications will be restricted to capital items which are specifically aimed at works such as stand-alone capital works which are being undertaken across a number of holdings to address, for example, invasive non-native species.

You must have written agreement from all the landowners concerned. To demonstrate this, you must submit a copy of the licence with your application.

It must be in effect before you apply to the scheme and include the following:

- a map of the area covered by the licence
- the duration of the licence
- the details of responsibilities and liabilities

- details of the landowners or main tenants covered by the licence
- details of the activities covered by the licence*

*For capital items, contractual licences must cover the contract monitoring period which is five years from the final payment of the capital item.

Short-term tenancies/contractual licences

Where your tenancy or licence does not cover the required duration, you must submit the Landlord Declaration Form (see above) with your application, in which your landlord or main tenant confirms that they will take responsibility for carrying out the proposed management and capital items for the remainder of the contract and any associated monitoring period (see 'change of occupiers or transfer of land' section below).

You cannot apply for land-based options on seasonal-held land, including arable, if your lease is for a period of less than a full year.

Crofting

If you are a main tenant of a croft with a tenancy which covers the required duration, you do not have to submit any supporting documentation.

If you are an official sub-tenant of a croft, which falls within the jurisdiction of the Crofting Commission, a copy of the letter issued by the Crofting Commission confirming the approval of the sub-let and its duration will also be acceptable as supporting documentation to that referred to at the tenancies section above.

If you are a grazing clerk, submitting an application on behalf of a grazing committee, your application must include the following supporting information:

- the written consent of a majority of the crofters with shares in the common grazing
- evidence that notice of the intention to submit an application and the proposed division of the grant amongst the eligible crofters has been issued by the grazings committee or constable to all shareholders sharing in the common grazings

Please note: any application for funding will not be considered until the documentation outlined within the relevant sections above has been submitted.

Change of occupiers or transfer of land

If there is a change of occupancy or a sale / transfer of the land within the contract agreement period, the onus will be on you, the contract holder, to make sure that the new occupier or owner of the land takes on your obligations under this scheme and that a successor request form is completed.

Where your tenancy or licence does not cover the required duration, the landlord or new tenant must enter into a successor's agreement within three months of the tenancy or licence ending by submitting a completed successors request form.

If these requirements cannot be met, you will normally need to repay all or part of the payments you have already received, plus interest.

You must let your local area office know about any changes affecting the legal occupiers of the land under a contract.

Please also see guidance on withdrawing from the scheme and contract succession.

[Withdrawing from the scheme](#)

[Contract Succession](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Contractual licenses (third-party applications)	Guidance update
Change of occupiers or transfer of land	Addition of text on withdrawing from the scheme and added link to Contract Succession page.

Introduction - tenancies	Addition of further guidance regarding submitting your lease. Landlord declaration form replaced with the updated version.
Introduction - crofting	Removal of text relating to change of occupiers or transfers of land. Addition of text clarifying that a letter from the Crofting Commission is needed when croft falls within jurisdiction of the Crofting Commission

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4 How to apply

Date published: 16 January, 2019

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Introduction

The 2019 Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application round opens on Wednesday 16 January, 2019 and was due to close on Friday 12 April, 2019. However, the deadline has now been extended to **Wednesday 17 April, 2019**. Supporting documentation should be submitted by the 17 April, 2019 application deadline.

For collaborative applications involving five or more RPID registered businesses the application closing date is extended to Friday 31 May, 2019. This is in recognition of the additional time involved to facilitate collaborative action with many businesses.

It must be noted, however, that such collaborative applications submitted in the extension period (13 April, 2019 to 31 May, 2019) which, on assessment are not considered to be collaborative, will be rejected and will need to be re-submitted for consideration in a future application round. Therefore if you have any concerns about the collaborative arrangements of five applications or more we strongly advise you to submit your application by 17 April, 2019.

Further information on collaboration can be found [here](#).

Applications for [Slurry Storage](#) can be made during the main AECS window (Wednesday 16 January, 2019 to Wednesday 17 April, 2019), however, the deadline for stand alone slurry store applications is Wednesday 26 June, 2019.

The Slurry Storage element of applications will be scored separately. The targeted slurry storage scoring criteria, agreed with SEPA, can be found below.



[Slurry storage scoring criteria \(MS Excel, Size: 14.1 kB\)](#)

Criteria for slurry storage

A simple search tool is available to identify the relevant catchment type/name for a given farm code. Before using the catchment tool you must check that slurry storage is available on the farm code where the work is proposed by checking on the [AECS targeting tool](#).

Note that some farm codes around the boundary of designated NVZ areas may be incorrectly showing as eligible for slurry storage. If a farm code is known to have land in a designated NVZ area the eligibility for slurry storage should be checked with the relevant area office before commencing an application.

[Slurry storage catchment tool \(PDF, Size: 212.7 kB\)](#)

Note

For those of you intending to apply for Improving Public Access, please be aware that following a record number of high quality applications in 2018 we will not be reopening this element of AECS in 2019. Therefore, **no** applications should be submitted for Improving Public Access in 2019

Role of the case officer

When you submit your application for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, it will be assigned to a case officer. They will manage the application process from the formal submission to the point at which it has been assessed and presented to the relevant individual or group who will determine whether it should be approved, either in whole or in part.

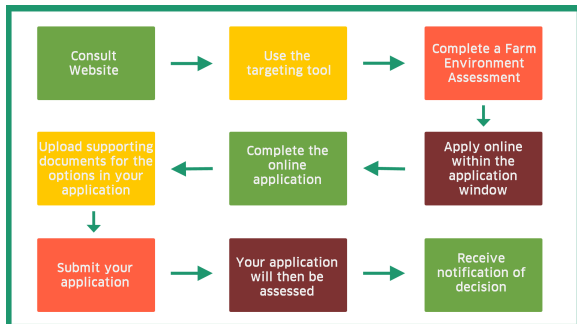
Please refer to the [Your application will then be assessed](#) step of the application process below.

Application process



[Online application guidance \(PDF, Size: 4.1 MB\)](#)

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS): Online application guidance for customers



1. Consult website

You should first check the relevant sections of the AECS website to get a better understanding of the rules of the scheme, and to check that you will be eligible to apply. All the individual pages of the full scheme guidance together with rules and management requirements for each management option and capital item can be found at the right hand side of this web page.

2. Use the targeting tool

Consult the website and enter your holding number into the targeting tool to see which of the targeted options are available on your land. If you have several holdings, you will need to enter each of these separately.

Targeting tool

If you find your location code is not appearing on the targeting tool, this may be connected to the ongoing mapping and land change work taking place following the introduction of the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS). Please contact your local RPID to discuss this matter further.

3. Complete a Farm Environment Assessment

All applications will need to include a Farm Environment Assessment, apart from applications which are solely for the following:

- coastal embankment breaching, lowering or removal
- river embankment breaching, lowering or removal
- restoring (protecting) river banks
- stand alone slurry stores
- organics
- upland habitat impact assessment for deer management (as standalone capital item)

The Farm Environment Assessment is a tool to help you to take stock of the important environmental features on your holding and plan what to include in your application.

Find out more about [Farm Environment Assessment here](#) . This webpage also explains the requirement to carry out a Diffuse Pollution Assessment and a Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment if applicable.

4. Apply online within the application window

Your application for support under this scheme must be submitted online by registering and logging in to Rural Payments and Services.

[You can register for this service here](#) if you have not registered already.

To simplify the administration of the scheme you will normally be limited to a single application per year. However, an exception will apply for the management of the following designated sites:

- European Natura Sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

An exception will also be made for certain situations for land managers who have widely separated areas of land (normally at least five miles apart) where it is more appropriate to detail the management under separate applications.

Separate applications will also be allowed for applications solely for funding, organic aid and slurry storage.

5. Complete the online application

Once you have logged in to Rural Payments and Services, you will be able to submit an application online.

You can do this by clicking 'Applications' from your customer home page and selecting 'Agri-Environment Climate Scheme' from the drop down list to start a new application.

You will be asked a series of questions about your application. You will also need to enter the management options that you wish to undertake as well as any capital items.

The relevant Land Parcel Identifiers will need to be used (unless not yet allocated by RPID) and you will need to supply the areas to be managed under the relevant options and capital items.

The application system will prompt you when errors arise during the completion of the application. For example, you will be prompted when information requested at a particular section has not been provided to allow you to progress to the next stage of the application process.

6. Upload supporting documents for the options in your application

Along with the information you complete online you will also need to supply additional documents - see [checklist of requirements](#) .

Any supporting documents can be uploaded directly into the application system. If you have problems doing this or are not sure which documents you need to submit, contact your local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or [Scottish Natural Heritage](#).

Supporting documents should be submitted by the application deadline 17 April, 2019.

7. Submit your application

Once you have completed your application successfully, the system will display a summary of the options or items you have applied for.

A more detailed Schedule of Works will also be available setting out the proposed claim profile of either annual management option payments or payment details for capital items or both (whichever is applicable to your application).

If you are satisfied that the summary and Schedule of Works are in order, you will be asked to confirm you have read the declarations and undertakings.

You will then be directed to click 'Submit application'. An acknowledgment of your application will appear on screen along with your application reference number. This reference number can be used to track the progress of your application.

Applications can be withdrawn and resubmitted with amendments before the closing date of the particular round of applications. However, no amendments can be accepted to a submitted application after the closing date has passed.

8. Your application will then be assessed

There are two levels of entry to this scheme and applications falling into each category will be assessed as follows:

- level one – applications up to an agreed monetary value for the round which is dependent on the amount and value of the applications received, in 2018 this was set at £250,000. Applications for this level will undergo an initial assessment by a case officer, including a discussion with you. The discussion may take place during an on-farm visit, depending on the options you have applied for. Your application is then considered at the local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or Scottish Natural Heritage area office for approval or rejection
- level two – applications above the agreed monetary value for the round, in 2018 this was £250,000. Applications for this level will undergo an assessment as per level one. After assessment the case will be forwarded to an expert panel constituted on a national basis for approval or rejection

See [Application Assessment](#)

Scoring criteria

As the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is a competitive scheme, we will compare your application against other applications received using [scoring criteria](#).

There criteria for Agri-Environment Climate Scheme applications are as follows:

- scale of delivery – assessment of how much of the land will be managed under the scheme compared to the total of land on your holding and how many diffuse pollution risks are addressed
- national priorities – nationally important priorities that will receive recognition in the scoring process
- habitat linkage – recognition that managing sites across a holding where there is linkage between them can provide additional benefit, (e.g. by providing wildlife corridors)
- long-term benefit – recognising that some options deliver environmental benefit for a period longer than the contract
- value for money – recognising where the delivery of management options with a lower associated infrastructure capital cost is beneficial compared to those that require higher initial infrastructure capital costs
- collaborative approach – recognising that collaboration between different applicants can lead to additional benefits to the environment than if they had acted independently

Additional benefits

- spatial priorities – recognising further targeting of certain options if they are within priority areas, where the option will deliver an increased benefit
- scheduled monuments – that management through the scheme will have a secondary benefit of protecting or reducing the risk of deterioration to a scheduled monument as verified by Historic Environment Scotland

9. Notification of decision

Once your application has been assessed, you will be notified as to whether it has been approved or rejected. If your application is approved you will then be sent a contract.

You must follow the instructions included both in the contract offer letter and within the contract itself to confirm that you wish to accept the terms of the contract offer.

In particular, you should note that there may be additional conditions included in the contract bespoke to your application.

The contract will specify what the funding is to be used for – this will be based on the information supplied in your application. An agent, acting as an accountable person, can only accept on behalf of a business if they have the mandated authority to do so.

If you are an agent accepting a contract on an applicants business' behalf, the case officer will contact the relevant RPID area office to request confirmation that you have the authority to sign the contract.

Any mandate in place will apply to the office that an agent works from. It does not apply to the agent as an individual. You may only start work when you get a confirmation letter letting you know that you can begin.

You are under no obligation to accept the contract offer. If you decide not to proceed, please tell us and we will cancel the contract. The case officer will formally acknowledge your rejection.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Application Process	Online Application Guidance update
Introduction	Changes to application window dates for 2019 and added info on collaborative applications
Application Process	Changes to order in which to apply, graphic updated
Introduction	Changes to application window dates for 2018 and added info on collaborative applications
Application Process	Online Application Guidance update
Introduction	Slurry storage scoring criteria and catchment tool added

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5 Checklist of requirements for applications

Date published: 20 December, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

This page provides a summary of the information that should be submitted as part of an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application.

It should be read in conjunction with:

- [Further requirements for applicants](#)
- [Important tips and guidance for applications](#)

This list is not exhaustive and you will need to check the requirements of your specific application to determine which supporting documentation should be submitted.

Missing documents may make your application ineligible.

Once you commence the online application process you should regularly review the 'supporting documents' section of your AECS application to check which documents have been uploaded or submitted through the post or directly to the relevant area office.

This will help you ensure that all the relevant information in support of your application is provided before the application window closes and avoid its rejection due to missing documentation.

If you are unable to provide any of the documents below for reasons beyond your control please contact RPID before the submission deadline to make them aware of the difficulty (taking a note of the method of contact, officer alerted to issue, date and time).

All applications

All applications require the following*:

Online data entry (LPIDs, lengths, areas, etc)

- Farm Environment Map
- Farm Environment Management Map
- Farm Environment Table
- Diffuse Pollution Field Map (can be incorporated in Farm Environment Map)
- Diffuse Pollution Table (can be incorporated in Farm Environment Table)
- Diffuse Pollution Management Map (can be incorporated in Farm Environment Management Map)

*The [Farm Environment Assessment guidance](#) explains the circumstances when the documentation listed above is not required .

- Certain [water quality options](#) require the production of 1) a Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment Map and 2) a Diffuse Pollution Steading Management Map and Diffuse Pollution Steading Management table

Moorland options

All moorland applications require the following:

- Moorland Management and Grazing Plan
- Map of moorland habitats
- Map of access routes and supplementary feed sites
- Map of proposed management

Other moorland plans maps and records may be required:

- Muirburn Plan and Map
- Peatland Restoration Plan and Map
- Bracken Management Plan and Map
- Deer Management Plan

- Predator Control Plan and Map
- If you apply for Stock Disposal or Away wintering you must submit copies of your flock records with your application

Specific plans and maps

- **Specific plans / maps as required (check the requirements for the individual options and capital items that you are applying for):**
 - Grazing Management Plan
 - Hedgerow Management Plan
 - Lowland Raised Bog Management Plan
 - Peatland Restoration Plan
 - Scrub Control Plan
 - Chough Management Plan
 - Cropped Machair Management Plan
 - Bracken Management Plan and Map
 - Grass Strips in Arable Fields – summary template
 - Water Margins – summary table
 - Predator Control Plan and Map
 - Rotation map of arable / grassland options (if too complex to show on management map)
 - Plans / maps for following options and capital items:
 - Hard standings for troughs and gateways
 - Livestock crossings
 - Livestock tracks
 - Pond Creation and Restoration

Other information

Other information, as required:

- Landlord Declaration Form – see [Occupancy of land](#)
- Copy of lease – see [Occupancy of land](#)
- Any relevant forms. For example, Contractual Licence, Shared Boundary Agreement for march fence or restoring drystone or flagstone dykes
- [Endorsement Form](#) containing an [endorsement](#) from Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Forestry if proposing to carry out options or capital items outwith their target areas – see [targeting tool](#)
- If applying for the [Species-rich Grassland Management](#) or [Habitat mosaic management](#) option on hill and upland rough grazing land, you must request an [endorsement](#) from Scottish Natural Heritage. If this is awarded, you must submit it with your application. Allow enough time to complete this prior to the application deadline.
- Any consents and licences received from regulatory authorities, where applicable
- Ecological survey report for protected species
- Letter of approval from Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Environment Protection Agency if required as part of the eligibility requirements of a capital item
- [Collaborative Management Plan](#) and associated maps

Quotations table and quotes as required for any actual cost capital item e.g. water troughs. (see Further requirements for applicants)

- Any supporting evidence for scoring criteria e.g. Vulnerable Priority Species (VPS) Form plus any supporting evidence as required – see [Scoring Criteria page](#)

Crofting applications

Crofting applicants may also need to provide some of the following:

If you are a grazing clerk, applying on behalf of a grazing committee, your application must include the following supporting information:

- the written consent of a majority of the crofters with shares in the common grazing
- evidence that notice of the intention to submit an application and the proposed division of the grant amongst the eligible crofters has been issued by the grazings committee or constable to all shareholders sharing in the common grazings

If you are an official sub-tenant of a croft which falls within the jurisdiction of the Crofting Commission:

- a copy of the letter issued by the Crofting Commission confirming the approval of the sub-let and its duration – this is an acceptable alternative to the landlord declaration or copy of the lease - see [Occupancy of land](#) guidance

Organic conversion and maintenance

Organic conversion and maintenance applicants need to consider additional requirements and provide the following at the time of application or as specified:

All Organic Conversion applications

- Farm Map illustrating the LPIDs to be converted
- Organic Viability Proposal endorsed by an organic certification body
- for organic conversion applications that also include agri-environment options or the organic maintenance option, you will have to submit the required supporting documents for those management options.
- for organic conversion application that also include agri-environment options, you should ensure the options are compatible – see [Double funding option incompatibility](#) page
- to be allocated extra points against the 'National Priority' scoring criteria at least 25 per cent of your permanently held land will have to be managed under the 'organic conversion' option

Organic conversion applicants also need to note the following:

You must liaise with your organic certification body to ensure you are compliant with the organic requirements before you apply to AECS, before you commence organic conversion and for the duration of your AECS contract. If your AECS application is successful:

1. Your organic certification body will require you to submit to them a full conversion plan for approval, prior to your organic start date
2. Your organic start date must be approved by your organic certification body before you commence conversion, but also refer to the AECS Organic Farming conversion requirements
3. Once you have received your official letter confirming your organic start date from your organic certification body, you should forward this to your local Area Office.

All Organic Maintenance applications

- Farm Map illustrating the LPIDs to be maintained under organic status
- valid Organic certificate
- Current Organic Schedule of LPIDs from your organic certification body
- if your organic maintenance application also includes agri-environment options or organic conversion of additional land, you will have to submit the required supporting documents for those management options.
- if your organic maintenance application also includes agri-environment options, you should ensure the options are compatible
- to be allocated extra points against the 'National Priority' scoring criteria at least 75 per cent of your permanently held land will have to be managed under the 'organic maintenance' option

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6 Important Tips and Guidance for Applications

Date published: 16 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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Introduction

To make sure your application is accepted when first submitted, it's important that it is completed properly, with all the information needed.

Before you start your submission, please take into account the following tips and common errors.

Please also refer to "[checklist of Requirements](#)" and "[Further requirements for applicants](#)" which expand on the information provided below.

Top tips for submitting an AECS application

- familiarise yourself with individual option and capital item guidance and full scheme guidance. Check that you are using the latest version which is in place when the scheme re-opens for applications in 2019
- designated sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Natura sites (SPA or SAC): If you are applying within a designated site, you are strongly advised to speak to [Scottish Natural Heritage](#) before preparing your application. This will help ensure the management you are proposing is appropriate and all issues are being addressed, and will reduce the risk of an application being rejected
- consult with relevant individuals/bodies to obtain documentation / necessary approval ahead of submitting your application e.g Scheduled Monument Consent, where applicable, from Historic Environment Scotland when incorporating management of scheduled monuments within your application
- complete all sections of the online application correctly. For example, if some of the area proposed for management is held under secure tenancy and the rest is owned select both options
- double check that all the required documents accompanying your application meet the specific standards referred to in the scheme guidance and have been uploaded or submitted before the application deadline. Ensure that you use the latest templates ([see the checklist of requirements](#))
- for all management options and capital items which require an individual plan to support your application, (e.g. Grazing Plan, Scrub Control Plan) we strongly advise that you use the relevant plan template.. If you choose to create your own plan, then you **MUST** provide all information requested in the template. Failure to do so may result in the plan being deemed not fit for purpose and the option or item removed from your application.
- ensure maps are created and annotated in accordance with the Mapping, Farm Environment Assessment, Diffuse Pollution Risk Assessment and Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment guidance (where applicable). You must also meet mapping requirements as set out for each individual management option and capital item and in the Collaborative approach section of the Scoring Criteria guidance, where applicable

- contact your local [RPID Area Office](#) or [Scottish Natural Heritage](#) regional office if you have a query about the scheme. RPID Area Offices can also help if you have any difficulties in uploading supporting documents for your application
- check the Schedule of Work produced at the time the application is due to be submitted to make sure that it contains all the management options and capital items you wish to apply for and that the proposed claim timings are correct
- it is essential that the application is prepared with the full involvement and understanding of the land manager responsible for delivering the work on the ground. The Case Officer's site visit will include a discussion with this person and if they are unaware of what has been included in the application or cannot deliver some options/items the full application will be rejected
- if an application contains many errors and would require significant changes to make the proposals eligible for funding, it will be deemed not fit for purpose and will be rejected. Case officers are not able to make significant changes within the rules of the scheme

Common errors

Below are some of the most common errors made when submitting an AECS application. These can result in your application being rejected, so it's worth taking the time to get it right.

Documents required that relate to the ownership/tenancy of the land

A common issue with applications is a failure to submit documents related to the ownership/tenancy of the land:

- a completed landlord declaration form or copy of lease
- crofting shareholders support/evidence
- a fully completed shared boundary agreement for march fencing or restoring drystone or flagstone dykes

Please check the guidance for occupancy of land for more information.

Occupancy of land

A common error regarding the submission of a lease has been when it is submitted for another purpose and it is then used in support of an AECS application.

To clarify, for this to be acceptable, the applicant is responsible for making sure that the lease submitted already meets the AECS requirements.

The applicant must also make sure that sufficient details are entered in the Proof of secure tenancy section of the online AECS application to alert the case officer of this request – information to be added about the lease's earlier submission to RPID and stating that it is also to be used for AECS.

Documents required to gain points as part of the Scoring Criteria

A common issue which can result in the failure to score points under the relevant Scoring Criteria categories is the absence of the relevant documentation. Examples of this are included below:

National priorities - Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species (VPS).

In order to secure the points for enhancing biodiversity you must make sure that:

- the Vulnerable Priority Species form is submitted
- your application includes relevant management/capital options for the species you have provided supporting information for

Please check the guidance for [vulnerable priority species](#) for more information.

Collaborative approach

To be awarded points for collaboration, the person leading on the collaborative project must correctly complete a Collaborative Management Plan (using the template in the [Scoring Criteria webpage](#)) along with a map or maps clearly showing the extent of the collaborative work proposed.

The Plan must be agreed with all parties involved and must clearly demonstrate the contribution each participant applying to AECS will make. (You can apply for funding towards the cost of the plan, as explained in the [Claims and Payments webpage](#)).

A copy of the completed Plan and map(s) must be submitted by each applicant involved in the collaborative project, along with their AECS application.

Including items/options without checking their eligibility

Every option or item has guidance stating when it is eligible. It is a common error to assume that similar options from previous schemes have retained the same eligibility requirements. Always check the latest AECS guidance.

Also, please pay attention to the best practice that is outlined in the supporting guidance for options and items, as this will help ensure that you meet the scheme requirements.

The table below shows common / potential causes of errors relating to options and capital items:

Subject		Comments
Management options general		Ensure the specified supporting maps and tables are submitted as part of the Farm Environment assessment, Diffuse Pollution Risk Assessment and Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment, where applicable
Targeted options		If an option is not on the list for your holding, you cannot apply for it unless you submit an endorsement with your application. Otherwise the whole application may become ineligible. Allow plenty of time to obtain an endorsement from SNH to ensure you have it in time for the submission deadline. Please refer to the ' Endorsement ' section of the AECS guidance to check when an 'Endorsement' is available, as these are limited to certain options and designated sites.
Targeting tool		If you are applying for several holdings, remember that an option may be eligible on the Main Location Code but not on the other Location Codes.
Management Options	Management options that require capital items	Ensure the relevant capital items are included. For example, the Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds option requires the Creation of Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds capital item.
	Water margins options	The summary tables must be fully completed, making it clear where the margins are of varying widths, and excluding the margin width required under GAEC.
	Wader grazed grassland options	For Wader grazed grassland applicants you must choose one of the three grazing regimes. In your application, you must provide detail of which grazing regime you have chosen.
	Wader grazed grassland Wader and Wildlife mown grassland	Do not plant hedges around fields entered into these management options. In order to be awarded National priority VPS scoring points, you must not include a 30m margin adjacent to trees, hedges or woodland in your claim area. This buffer

		must be clearly marked and labelled on your management map.
	Habitat Mosaic Management and Species-Rich Grassland Management	If you are applying for these options on hill and upland rough grazing land, you must request an endorsement from SNH prior to applying. If the endorsement is awarded, you must submit this alongside your application. Allow enough time to ensure you have this prior to the application round closing.
	Wader management on heath mosaics (within the Heath management option)	<p>To apply for this option, fields must fall within the target area for the wader grazed grassland option and you must stipulate in your application which waders your plan will benefit. You must follow the grazing regime stated in the option.</p> <p>If the area has previously been managed as moorland under agri-environment, you must continue to claim it as moorland.</p> <p>If the land has not been claimed under agri-environment before, but is a large, heath/mire dominated area, then it should be entered under the Moorland management option - failure to do so will result in the option being removed from the plan, which could jeopardise the whole application. If you are unsure of habitat eligibility, speak to SNH or RPID before applying.</p>
Capital items	Actual costs	<p>Where there is an actual cost capital item, you must provide the quotes and complete the quotations table in line with the scheme guidance. Missing or inadequate quotes for some items, such as water troughs or upland habitat impact assessment, may make your application ineligible.</p> <p>Actual cost fencing must be fully justified and is only available where there is a specific need e.g.. helicopter required to deliver materials in inaccessible sites.</p>
	Fencing	<p>If there is a current stock fence in place and it is not derelict and would last the five years of an AECS agreement then funding for a new stock fence will not be considered acceptable.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, we may allow funding of a new fence to create a wider water margin where the existing fenced margin is too narrow. This does not apply if the margin was created with Rural priorities funding and is being increased in width to meet GAEC 1 requirements.</p> <p>Where a new fence is permitted, it will be a condition of the AECS contract that you remove and dispose of the existing fence appropriately - at your own cost.</p> <p>If you are unsure, request advice from RPID or SNH.</p> <p>Current and proposed grazing practices will also be considered in determining if the stock fence is necessary/beneficial for a particular management option.</p>
	Fence removal	This is only eligible if it is required to deliver benefit to a habitat or is in black grouse or capercaillie core areas. It cannot be used to fund removal of existing fencing so that new fencing can be erected.
	Scare fencing	This item is only available alongside Restoring Drystone or Flagstone Dykes.

		For all other situations apply for temporary electric fencing.
	Control of Scrub or Woody Vegetation	Plan to undertake all scrub control on a site within the first two years of your contract, to prevent continuous seeding of shrub species.
	Hard standings, Livestock Tracks, Livestock Crossings	If applying for these items, there must be a diffuse pollution risk which the items will resolve.
	Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems Hard Standings Livestock Crossing Livestock Tracks Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems Pesticide Handling Facilities Water-use Efficiency Irrigation Lagoon	If applying for any of these options, you must submit a Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment
	Sediment Ponds	Where sediment ponds have an integrated sediment trap, they need to be claimed separately as each has a different cost.

[Previous versions](#)

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7 Further requirements for applicants

Date published: 18 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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Introduction

When you apply for this scheme, there are a number of things you need to consider.

The [Important Tips and Guidance](#) for applications and the [Checklist of Requirements](#) highlights the key points that you need to consider before applying to the Scheme. The guidance below is to be read in conjunction with these pieces of guidance as it explains the following items in more detail:

- what consents and licences you may need
- if you need a protected species survey
- if you need to submit quotes for actual cost capital items

Consents and licences

When you first think of an idea that you wish to progress through this scheme, and consider that a consent or licence may be required, you should contact the relevant organisation for advice at the earliest opportunity.

Their staff or their websites will provide details on consent / licensing requirements in your specific circumstances and advise on how to proceed.

This should help you minimise any time spent applying for activities which are unlikely to receive consent and therefore funding. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have any necessary authorisation for the work that you wish to carry out.

Some examples of where you might require a particular authorisation include:

- felling licence from Scottish Forestry for removing heavy scrub under the Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation capital item, or if relevant, for tree felling under Improving Public Access
- authorisation from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) if an abstraction from the water environment is required to fill the lagoon under the Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon capital item
- consents from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) relating to [Scheduled Monuments \(PDF, Size: 799.9 kB\)](#)

If your application includes proposals for land in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Natura site, we will consider any effects on these sites. Please refer to the guidance on [designated areas](#). If your application is successful and you are awarded a contract, you will not need any further authorisation from Scottish Natural Heritage for the activities covered by the contract.

If you are in any doubt about whether your proposed works will affect a protected species, refer to the guidance on protected species (see below).

If you have already received consent or written approval from a consenting authority you should upload a copy of the relevant documentation to accompany your online application. You should make sure that you keep a copy available for inspection.

You must ensure that you hold any required licence or consent before you start the management for which a licence or consent is required.

Protected species

There are several pieces of legislation giving protection to species found in Scotland. In many cases it is an offence to kill or capture animals including birds, or to uproot plants.

The law also protects some wild creatures from disturbance or harassment, or disturbance of their nests or resting places. Examples of commonly encountered species are shown below. Further details can be found on the [Scottish Natural Heritage protected areas website](#) .

You should therefore consider whether the management options or capital items you propose will affect any protected species. Please take in to account the timings and locations of works (for example avoiding disturbance of birds during the breeding season). You should note the presence of any protected species in your Farm Environment Assessment or in your Improving Public Access application.

The [interactive tools on SNHi](#) may be helpful, over and above your own knowledge of the land and [Scottish Natural Heritage area staff](#) can provide further guidance where necessary.

You should organise an appropriate ecological survey of the area if you know that your land supports protected species which may be affected by your proposal.

The survey report should include ways to mitigate unavoidable damage or disturbance and suggest ideas to compensate for any losses. The report should also identify any licensing requirements which might allow the work to go ahead in spite of the protected species.

You should also submit the report along with your application.

Please contact the [Scottish Natural Heritage licensing team](#) if you need more advice on survey requirements and licensing.

Commonly encountered protected species include:

- bats, otters, great crested newts and natterjack toads – these are European Protected Species, protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)
- wild birds protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- red squirrels, pine martens, water voles and other animals – these are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)
- plants listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Quotes

If you require or wish to use [actual costs](#) , you must submit written competitive quotations for the actual cost items included in your application to demonstrate that the project costs are reasonable. Before applying for any actual cost capital items, please read the [Funding under this scheme guidance](#) , to check that you meet the eligibility requirements, and please ensure that your application includes adequate justification for the use of actual costs.

There should be no conflict of interest between the suppliers providing the quotes, or between the applicant's agent and the suppliers. For example, an agent should not tender a quote for works.

If the cost is £10,000 or less a minimum of two written quotations is required. If the cost is more than £10,000, you must submit a minimum of three written quotations

Only in exceptional circumstances is one quotation acceptable and it must meet the criteria set out below.

The quotations table below must also be completed for all applications with actual cost items, summarising the quotes information - see example below.

Actual cost items which are not supported by the required written quotations and are not detailed in this quotations table will not progress past the assessment stage.

Such costs will therefore not feature in any successful application.



[Quotations table – example \(PDF, Size: 95.8 kB\)](#)

Example table



[Quotations table – blank template \(MS Word, Size: 135.8 kB\)](#)

Use this template to record the quotations you have sourced.

You should ask all suppliers to quote on a clear specification so that quotes can be compared on a like-for-like basis. The quotes must refer to this specification. You must provide a copy of the specification with your application.

If the actual costs are for an SSSI or Natura site or scheduled monument within these designated sites, your specification must use the same unit of measurement as the equivalent standard cost capital item.

When assessing your application, the case officer will check that the quotes are clear and accurately reflect what is being proposed, and will consider whether the proposed costs are reasonable.

The case officer will be looking for the following basic elements in all quotes supplied:

- quotes are addressed to you, the applicant
- quotes are in written / printed form and clearly originated from a reputable supplier who can deliver the items or work
- supplier's contact / business details are clear and legitimate – on business headed notepaper
- quote is based on the same specifications as described in the application
- no missing elements
- no ineligible elements
- cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
- for larger projects, the quote must include a schedule which must provide a breakdown of costs for each of the main stages of the work
- suppliers should confirm for how long the quote is valid
- whether the price includes appropriate VAT rate. Details of any VAT to be paid should be shown against the relevant items. This is to determine the correct level of grant award
- for capital items intended to benefit the environment and the long term management of scheduled monuments on designated sites (SSSI or Natura - see [Funding under this scheme](#)), the quotes would need to be sufficiently detailed to show the methodology and specialist requirements.

Any costs not included in the total estimated costs on your application will not be eligible for grant.

It is therefore essential that you include all costs related to the project in your application.

The amount we pay will not exceed maximum amount / total cost per 'item' shown on the contract / schedule of work.

If the quotes supplied are insufficient in any way, the case officer will advise you of this. It is your responsibility to remedy any deficiencies and supply the case officer with the required documentation.

Failure to do so means that the relevant costs will not be considered as part of the application and, in exceptional circumstances, may risk rejection of the whole application at this stage.

If you are VAT registered you should include the lowest cost in your application net of VAT. If you are not VAT registered and have confirmed this during the customer registration process, you may claim the full cost including VAT.

If the application is approved, funding will be based on the lowest quote received, excluding any quotes which are insufficient. You can choose to proceed with a more expensive company, if you wish, but you must be willing to fund the difference yourself.

When entering information about actual costs in your application:

- use wording that clearly describes the work proposed
- for larger projects, you can breakdown the project into separate lines defining key stages, which can be claimed separately once these stages have been completed. There will not be the ability to make interim claims

Exceptions – acceptance of one quote

Subject to case officer's approval, one quote may be admissible when:

1. The specifications are so specialised that only limited suppliers are available and it would be unreasonable or impracticable to find a second or third quote. For example, when the supplier is a contractor required to carry out works in a remote area where only one qualified contractor is available and the scale of works would not attract contractors from further away.

The case officer will still be expected to check value for money against standard rates for similar activities elsewhere, such as those published in the [SAC Consulting Farm Management Handbook](#), whilst taking into account the remote location factor.

2. The individual item value is below £1,000 and you can justify why you have little alternative but to source individual items from a single reputable supplier. You must demonstrate why the work cannot be more easily tendered in larger parts and two or three quotes obtained.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Introduction	We have added updated links to 'Important Tips and Guidance for 2018' and the 'Checklist of Requirements'
Quotes	We have updated the quotations tables for 2018

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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8 Designations: natural heritage, landscape, historic

Date published: 7 December, 2017

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Introduction

If you intend to apply to this scheme on any land that is within or adjacent to a designated site, you must take this into account when preparing your application.

There are three types of designation that may impact on an application:

- **natural heritage designations:** Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Natura sites – Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- **landscape and recreational designations:** National Scenic Area, Regional Park, Country Park, National Park
- **historic and archaeological designations:** Scheduled Monuments

Natural heritage designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura Sites

You can find details of the SSSIs and Natura sites on your land using [Scottish Natural Heritage's SiteLink website](#) .

On the SiteLink home page you can click on a site name to find a list of features for that site that are of special interests and for which the site was designated.

For example, "Corncrake" or "Sand Dunes".

You can also find a site map, and a Site Management Statement with information on managing the features.

On the SiteLink home page, you can also click on "Map Search" to find sites in your area.

For further information on SSSIs or Natura sites, or advice on managing your SSSI or Natura land through this scheme, please contact Scottish Natural Heritage.

You are strongly advised to seek advice from Scottish Natural Heritage before drafting an application for a designated site. If you do not, and Scottish Natural Heritage has significant issues with the management you propose for the designated site, this may prejudice the success of your application.

[Contact Scottish Natural Heritage](#)

Providing SSSI or Natura information in your application

In your online application, you will be asked to list any SSSIs or Natura sites involved and the features involved.

For some options and capital items, you may be required to complete a specialist management plan. You will have to refer to your designated site within such a plan.

Scottish Natural Heritage staff will be able to advise you on the appropriate management of the designated site.

Availability of options

If you wish to carry out management to benefit an SSSI and / or Natura site, you can apply for any management options (with the exception of the Hen Harrier Grassland Management option which is only available in Orkney) or capital items which will benefit the special features of the site, even if they do not appear on your list of targeted options.

If you wish to apply for an option that does not appear on your targeted list then you must first obtain an [endorsement](#) from Scottish Natural Heritage and submit this along with your Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application.

Assessment of applications for SSSIs or Natura sites

Your case officer will consider the effects of your proposed management on the SSSI and / or Natura site features and consult Scottish Natural Heritage and other relevant regulatory bodies.

If your proposed management is likely to damage any features the application cannot be approved.

Nearly all Natura sites are also designated as SSSIs. When your case officer is assessing and scoring your application, they will take into account and benefits to SSSI or Natura sites

SSSI consents

You do not need separate SSSI consent from Scottish Natural Heritage for works on or affecting an SSSI which are included in your contract, for the duration of that contract.

It is possible that you may have existing consents from Scottish Natural Heritage that are not compatible with the management required under this Scheme; for example, you may have a consent for grazing sheep, but you are applying to graze cattle instead under this scheme.

In such cases, the contract requirements take precedence over the existing consent, but only for the duration of the contract.

[Landscape and recreational designations](#)

There are 40 National Scenic Areas in Scotland, covering 13 per cent of the country.

They include mountain areas such as the Skye Cuillins, Ben Nevis and Glencoe, and island landscapes within the Hebrides and the Northern Isles. You can find out more about these areas using the link below, along with information around planning and development.

[National Scenic Areas](#)

[Historic and archaeological designations](#)

Scheduled monuments

Scheduled monuments are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979).

Historic Environment Scotland encourages positive management of scheduled monuments to ensure these nationally important sites are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Most works on scheduled monuments do however require scheduled monument consent and it is an offence to undertake works without consent. This includes any ground-breaking works, fencing, drainage, tree removal, paths, steps and flooding works.

There is no specific funding for management works on scheduled monuments within the this scheme.

However, a number of annual recurrent options and capital items have the potential to offer dual benefits to both the environment and the long-term management of scheduled monuments.

Where proposed works meet environmental criteria but also include a scheduled monument for which the works will be beneficial, additional points may be gained in recognition of the multiple benefits offered.

The guidance note 'Scotland Rural Development Programme – Management of Scheduled Monuments: Management options and capital items', gives more details on relevant options and capital items. This can be downloaded below.

Not all options and capital items are suitable for scheduled monuments, so it is important that you contact Historic Environment Scotland for advice at an early stage of your planning. Applications to Historic Environment Scotland for scheduled monument consent are normally dealt with within nine weeks.

You can get advice on scheduled monuments and the scheduled monument consent process from:

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

0131 668 8716

HMconsultations@hes.scot

If you are carrying out any agri-environment options, you may be penalised if inspections show that you have knowingly damaged or destroyed a scheduled monument.

You may also have committed a criminal offence and face prosecution.

It is therefore important that you are aware of the location, nature and extent of any scheduled monuments on your land. It is advisable to mark these clearly and accurately on any plans you prepare such as your [Farm Environment Assessment](#), and particularly on any information that you provide to a contractor or other third party working on the land.

This is particularly important if you are planning a change in land use.

You may also wish to mark undesignated archaeological sites on your Farm Environment Assessment.

There are a number of sources that can help you to identify both designated and undesignated sites of archaeological and historical interest on your land:

- [you can consult Pastmap](#), which is a free online resource. It will provide the location and full extent of a scheduled monument and Inventory garden and designed landscape, and a central point for a listed building and its curtilage. It will also provide an approximate or central point for recorded unscheduled sites. The written descriptions of unscheduled sites in the National Monuments Record and Scottish Sites and Monuments Record data will help you to define on the ground the minimum extent of visible remains
- your local authority historic environment officer may be able to provide advice on the management and protection of unscheduled archaeological sites. However, not all local authority areas offer advisory services in relation to the Scottish Rural Development Programme. If you had an archaeological audit of your land for a previous agri-environment scheme, you can refer to this



[Scotland Rural Development Programme - Management of Scheduled Monuments: Management options and capital items \(PDF, Size: 799.9 kB\)](#)

Historic Environment Scotland

[Recent changes](#)

Section	Change
Historic and Archaeological designations	Information leaflet updated

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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9 Mapping

Date published: 14 December, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

You will need to provide several maps with your application:

- a Farm Environment Map, as part of your [Farm Environment Assessment](#) , together with maps for the Diffuse Pollution Assessment if required
- a Farm Environment Management Map, as part of your [Farm Environment Assessment](#) , showing the location of the management options and capital items within your application. This will form an integral part of your contract
- any maps required as part of the application requirements for individual management options and capital items
- a map or maps, to accompany your Collaborative Management Plan, where applicable, clearly showing the extent of the collaborative work proposed.

Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) maps

If you are a land occupier and have previously registered your land in order to claim payments under a support scheme operated by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division then you will have been issued with a LPIS map of your land holdings.

If you have not already registered your land and you wish to receive funding, you will need to register with us, in accordance with the [guidance on business registration](#).

Once you have registered, we will send you a digitised map of your land, called your LPIS map. Maps based on your LPIS maps will be acceptable.

To view the online mapping facility, you will need to log on to your Rural Payments and Services account. This will allow you to access your location codes, land parcel details and view / print maps held by us. Further information is available in section 1.8 of our Land Maintenance Form Guidance.



[Land Maintenance Form Guidance \(PDF, Size: 2.1 MB\)](#)

Land Maintenance Form Guidance

Ordnance Survey maps

If you do not possess a LPIS map, then your detailed maps must be based on up-to-date Ordnance Survey (OS) maps.

You must use originals or good quality copies (i.e. paper maps) unless you have access to digital mapping software enabling you to produce maps to the required standard. If this is the case, you can submit maps electronically.

Large scale mapping covering the whole of Scotland is [available from Ordnance Survey](#) in various hard-copy and digital formats under the product titles OS Sitemap or OS Landplan.

These products allow you to define your needs and maps can be produced site-centred regardless of National Grid sheet edges and at any size between A4 and AO.

Access to maps

Sitemap and Landplan maps are obtainable directly from the Ordnance Survey's Mapping and Data Centres – Ordnance Survey's retail outlets.

For more details on Sitemap, Landplan and other conventional Ordnance Survey products, contact your nearest Ordnance Survey Mapping and Data Centre or telephone Ordnance Survey Customer Information on 08456 05 05 05.

If you are producing maps from your own geographic information system (GIS) or digital mapping software, you should make sure that plots are based on up-to-date Ordnance Survey MasterMap data or 1:10,000 scale raster data (details of these products can be found on the [Ordnance Survey website](#)).

Copyright

You may use the LPIS map that we have given you, without the need for a copyright licence.

Any organisation or person wanting to copy Ordnance Survey based maps for their own business or private use must either be licensed by the Ordnance Survey or apply for permission each time a copy is required and keep to the terms of that permission.

It is your responsibility (or the Accountable Person – someone mandated to act on your behalf) to ensure that any copyright responsibilities are met.

The Ordnance Survey provides licences to many bodies (for example, local authorities, various professional organisations and business firms) and to individual customers who have a regular need to copy Ordnance Survey material.

To apply for a licence or for further information contact Ordnance Survey Customer Information on 08456 05 05 05.

Marking your maps

Your maps must be marked clearly and accurately and be consistent with your details in your application.

If you are carrying out a number of operations on the same area, you may need to use more than one map to ensure that the details are clear.

Your maps must:

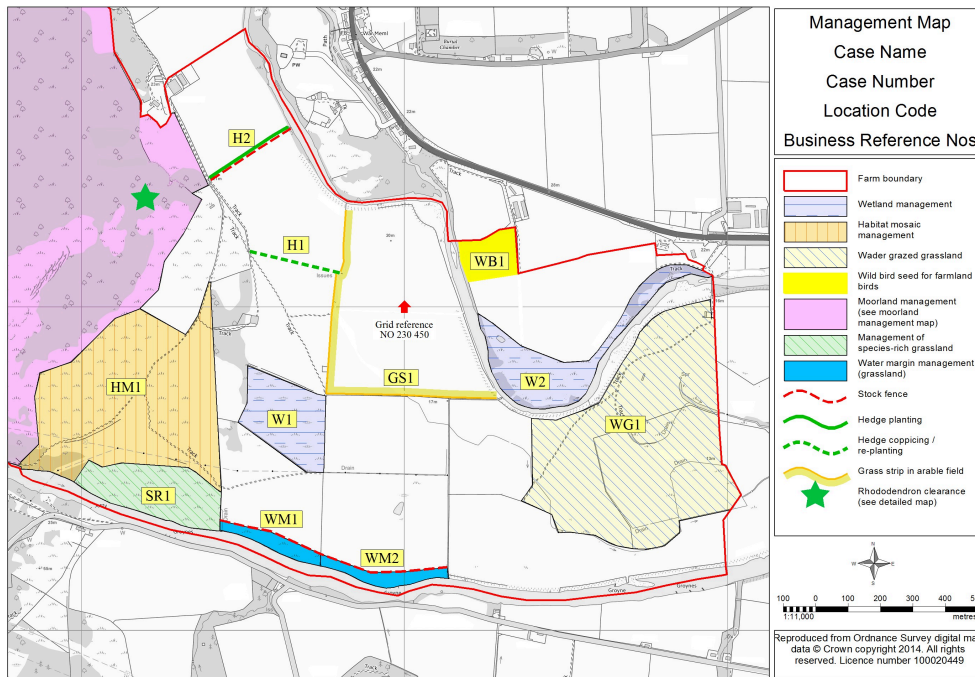
- show your case title
- show your Business Reference Number and Location Code Number
- be produced on an up-to-date LPIS or Ordnance Survey map
- be at an appropriate scale to show a reasonable level of detail for the types of operations you propose to carry out: 1:2500 is a good scale for arable parcels, 1:10000 is a good scale to use for hill parcels where you are proposing moorland management. Where you are proposing to manage a smaller area of a hill parcel you should also submit a smaller scale secondary map to clearly and accurately identify the area you propose to manage
- have the scale clearly marked on the map
- show where North is
- not have any map detail hidden by folds, labels or marks
- have the Ordnance Survey grid reference of the centre of your application area marked or you must ensure that the individual grid lines are correctly numbered

Management map details

The minimum requirements for displaying details on your map are:

- show each management option or capital item you are applying for, using an easily recognisable colour hatching or symbol on your map
- include a key to all symbols and hatching depicted on your maps
- label each individual management option area and capital item with a letter and ensure that these correspond to the map letters in your online application. You may use the same map letter if appropriate, for example H1 can depict both a new hedge and any new fence associated with the hedge

An example is shown below.



Recent changes

Section	Change
Marking your maps	Additional guidance added to last bullet point

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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10 Farm Environment Assessment

Date published: 16 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

To see recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of this page](#).

Introduction

You will need to prepare a Farm Environment Assessment to cover the whole of your holding if you are proposing to apply for any Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management options or capital items, unless you are only applying for the following options:

- * [Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- * [River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- * [Restoring \(Protecting\) River Banks](#)
- * [Slurry Storage](#) (as standalone capital item)
- [Organics Farming: Maintenance](#)
- [Organics Farming: Conversion](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for deer management](#) (as standalone capital item)

*These options will require a Diffuse pollution risk assessment - [see below](#)

Note

If your farm business has a Business Registration Number that consists of several Location Codes, the Farm Environment Assessment needs to cover the entirety of any Location Codes included in your application.

Other requirements:

If you are applying as a common grazings committee, the Farm Environment Assessment should cover the whole of the common grazings.

If you are applying as a single crofter with a common grazing apportionment (or designated cropped area), you should include the apportioned (or cropped area) in your Farm Environment Assessment.

[Funding](#) is available to help you to complete the Farm Environment Assessment.

Diffuse pollution risk assessment

All applications – apart from when you're only applying for organic farming and Upland HIA for deer management – must undertake a diffuse pollution field-based risk assessment - [see below](#) .

Diffuse pollution steading assessment

If you wish to apply for certain options relating to water quality, you must also prepare a diffuse pollution steading assessment – [see below](#) .

Farm Environment Assessment

The purpose of the assessment is to identify opportunities for beneficial environmental management through a review of all the main habitats and species on the farm.

The assessment will also highlight any key diffuse pollution risks on the land.

You will need to produce a:

- Farm Environment Map
- Farm Environment Table
- Farm Environment Management Map

To complete the Farm Environment Assessment effectively you will need to recognise basic habitat types and produce a Farm Environment Map showing these.

While mapping the habitats you will also need to consider the impact of current management and the needs of the key species present in these habitats, and any key diffuse pollution risks.

This information can then be added to the Farm Environment Table where you can provide more detail about habitat condition.

The process of collecting this information should help you to identify the priorities for management and the best options to apply for, both for the benefit of the habitats and species, and to manage any diffuse pollution risks.

You will need to show your chosen scheme management options and capital items in a Farm Environment Management Map.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify and map the diffuse pollution risks within the general Farm Environment Assessment, or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Assessment.

You may subsequently have to prepare a specialist management plan to meet the application requirements of some of the management options and capital items, which will require you to go into further detail at that stage.

Farm Environment Map

The map should clearly show the following:

- farm boundary
- existing habitats, using the habitats listed in the [Farm Environment Table template](#) , and the recommended map colourings as far as possible
- boundaries of the following protected places for nature: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and boundaries of protected places for history, e.g. a Scheduled Monument. If you find this makes the map too complex, you may wish to provide a separate map but this must also show the farm boundary
- any diffuse pollution risks identified (unless showing them on a separate map). These should be identified on the map as a dot, line or shape as appropriate showing their location together with a number

The map below is an example of a Farm Environment Map.



[Farm Environment Map \(PDF, Size: 430.1 kB\)](#)

An example of a Farm Environment Map

Farm Environment Table

The supporting table should begin with a short summary paragraph describing the farm. This should include details, such as farm type, size, agricultural activities, livestock numbers and type, crops grown and tenure.

Each habitat present should be described in a separate row, with details of habitat type, use, condition, together with any issues, risks or opportunities. You should note the presence of any species of interest, especially any [protected species](#) .

Where diffuse pollution risks have been found you should list them in the table using the corresponding numbers on the map and give a brief outline of the risk (unless identifying them separately in a separate table).

If no diffuse pollution risks have been found, just state that 'no diffuse pollution risks identified'.

You can download a template for the table and an example of how to complete it below.



[Farm Environment Table template - 2017 onwards \(MS Word, Size: 137.2 kB\)](#)

An editable template for the Farm Environment Table



[Farm Environment Table - example 2017 onwards \(PDF, Size: 219.9 kB\)](#)

An example of how to complete the Farm Environment Table

Farm Environment Management Map

The management map should clearly show where the proposed management options and capital items are to be undertaken on the farm.

Each piece of management activity should be individually labelled with a map letter for identification purposes and shown using a clear coloured map key. These map letters should be used in the online application.

For example, **HM1** could be used for existing hedgerow management under the Management or Restoration of Hedgerows option and **HC1** could be used to reflect new hedgerow creation under the Creation of Hedgerows option.

SR1 could be used for Species-rich Grassland Management.

Associated capital items may have the same map letter to avoid the map becoming cluttered. For example, stock fencing and hedge planting capital items for the same new hedge could be identified by the same map letter.

Similarly, capital items associated with a management option may be shown by a line or symbol and have the same map letter. For example, fencing on a water margin, as long as the map key clearly identifies the capital items.

You can download an example of a Farm Environment Management Map.



[Farm Environment Management Map \(PDF, Size: 384.9 kB\)](#)

An example of a Farm Environment Management Map

Diffuse pollution risk assessment

The purpose of this is to carry out a basic assessment of the diffuse pollution risks that may be present on your holding.

This will help to identify the options or actions that may be appropriate to help deal with these risks and where they should be located to maximise their effectiveness.

Field Assessment

To complete the field assessment it will be necessary to walk the fields with a view to identifying any diffuse pollution risks and to look for opportunities to reduce these risks.

Field Map

Using a map of an appropriate scale record as a line, point or shape as appropriate any diffuse pollution risks identified.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify the risks on the Farm Environment Assessment map or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Map, as shown in the example below.

Each of these points must be individually numbered on the map and noted in a corresponding table which will describe the diffuse pollution risk found and what action can be taken to deal with it.

The location of all surface waters such as burns, ditches, ponds and wetlands should also be recorded.

Diffuse pollution risk factors will vary depending on the type of farm (arable or livestock) and on local factors such as, proximity to watercourses, slope of land and soil types, access of livestock to watercourses, location of gateways and tracks etc.

Guidance on factors to consider when carrying out a field diffuse pollution risk assessment can be found in the accompanying guidance for the options such as 'Alternative Watering' and the options for 'Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems'.

For further guidance [click here](#)

Diffuse pollution steading assessment

The Farm Environment Assessment should help identify key diffuse pollution risk factors from the land.

However where water quality options are to be applied for, a slightly more detailed assessment should be carried out covering any diffuse pollution risks from the steading.

There is further guidance [here](#) on what diffuse pollution risk factors should be considered and how to identify and record them.

The purpose of this exercise is to consider the whole farm, identify potential pollution risks and select the most appropriate options which will help you to manage the risks effectively.

You must complete this if you are applying for any of the following options:

- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Pond](#)
- [Hard Standings for Troughs and Gateways](#)
- [Livestock Crossing](#)
- [Livestock Tracks](#)
- [Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#)
- [Pesticide Handling Facilities](#)
- [Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon](#)

Note:

The completion of a Steading Assessment can be waived for the options listed above if there is no steading present on the holding.

However, the applicant must provide a statement as part of the application explaining that a steading assessment has not been completed because there is not a steading present on the holding.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Whole page	various text changes
Introduction	We've updated the content relating to diffuse pollution risk assessment and diffuse pollution steading assessment

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

Download guidance

Click 'Download this page' to create a printable version of this guidance you can save or print out.

11 Diffuse pollution risk assessment and Diffuse pollution steading assessment

Date published: 16 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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Diffuse pollution risk assessment

The purpose of this is to carry out a basic assessment of the diffuse pollution risks that may be present on your holding.

This is required for all applications, except where you are only applying for Organic Farming or Upland HIA for deer management.

This will help to identify the options or actions that may be appropriate to help deal with these risks and where they should be located to maximise their effectiveness.

When assessing diffuse pollution risks it is important to consider whether diffuse pollution is actually occurring or whether there is a real risk of pollution occurring. In order to assess this; it is useful to think along the lines of the Source - Pathway -Receptor approach, as follows:

- 1. Has a **SOURCE** of diffuse pollution been identified? Examples include dirty yard areas, eroded areas at gates etc.
- 2. Is there a clearly identified **PATHWAY** for transporting the potential pollutants from the source to a watercourse? Examples include an open drain/ gully at a steading which drains to a watercourse or direct run-off from the source area such as a hardstanding and/or track to a watercourse.
- **NOTE:** lightly contaminated run-off which currently discharges onto grassed areas, with no direct run-off to a watercourse, is not generally considered to be a water pollution risk, even if there are underground field drains present.
- 3. Is there a **RECEPTOR** (receiving water). If no receptor has been identified then there is no real pollution risk. (NB. in some cases the receiving water may be outside the farm boundary, however if there is a connection (via drain or ditch etc) a pollution risk may still exist).

A water pollution risk only occurs if all 3 of the above can be identified.

Where SEPA has carried out a farm visit, have they identified a diffuse pollution problem or risk at the steading and/ or out in the fields? There should be a letter from SEPA with a map/ plan identifying the

pollution issues found. This could be used as a basis to create your own diffuse pollution assessment for the whole farm.

Field assessment

To complete the field assessment it will be necessary to walk the fields with a view to identifying any diffuse pollution risks and to look for opportunities to reduce these risks.

Field map

Using a map of an appropriate scale record as a line, point or shape as appropriate any diffuse pollution risks identified.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify the risks on the Farm Environment Assessment map or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Map, as shown in the example below.

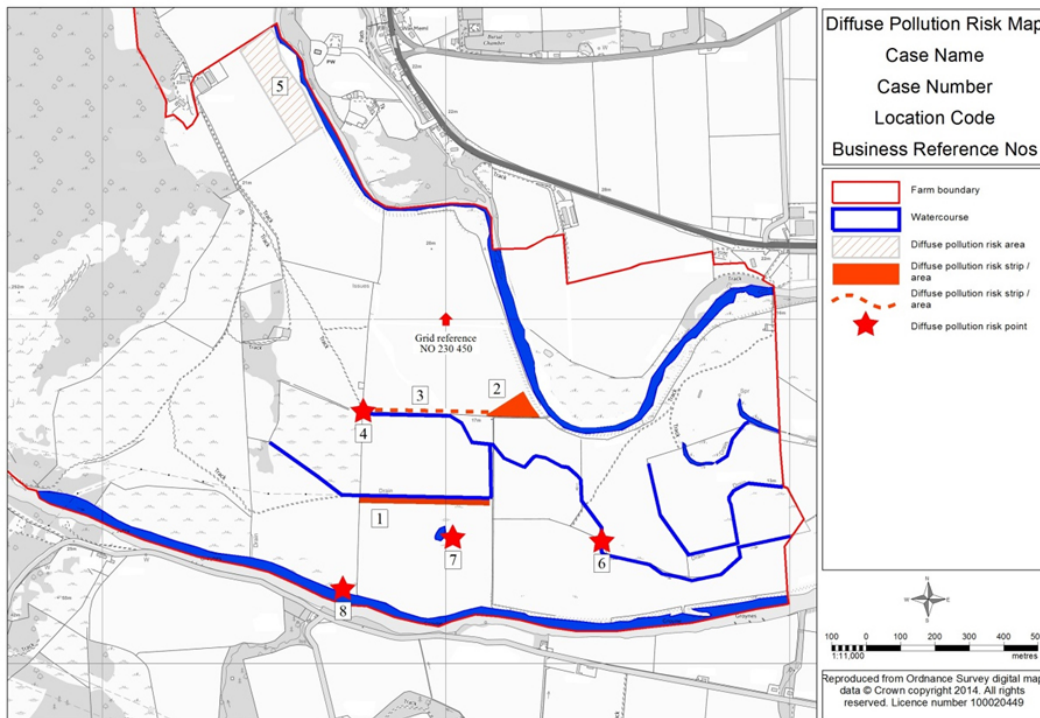
Each of these points must be individually numbered on the map and noted in a corresponding table which will describe the diffuse pollution risk found and what action can be taken to deal with it.

The location of all surface waters such as burns, ditches, ponds and wetlands etc should also be recorded.

Diffuse pollution risk factors will vary depending on the type of farm (arable or livestock) and on local factors such as, proximity to watercourses, slope of land and soil types, access of livestock to watercourses, location of gateways and tracks etc.

Guidance on factors to consider when carrying out a field diffuse pollution risk assessment can be found in the accompanying guidance for the options such as 'Alternative Watering' and the options for the 'Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems'.

When the initial assessment is complete the next step is to decide what action and/or options might be appropriate to help reduce diffuse pollution risks.



Number on map	Diffuse pollution risk	Action or potential options (for guidance only)
1	Grass field, cattle have direct access to ditch. Risk of poaching and erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alternative watering facilities - Water margin in permanent grassland field

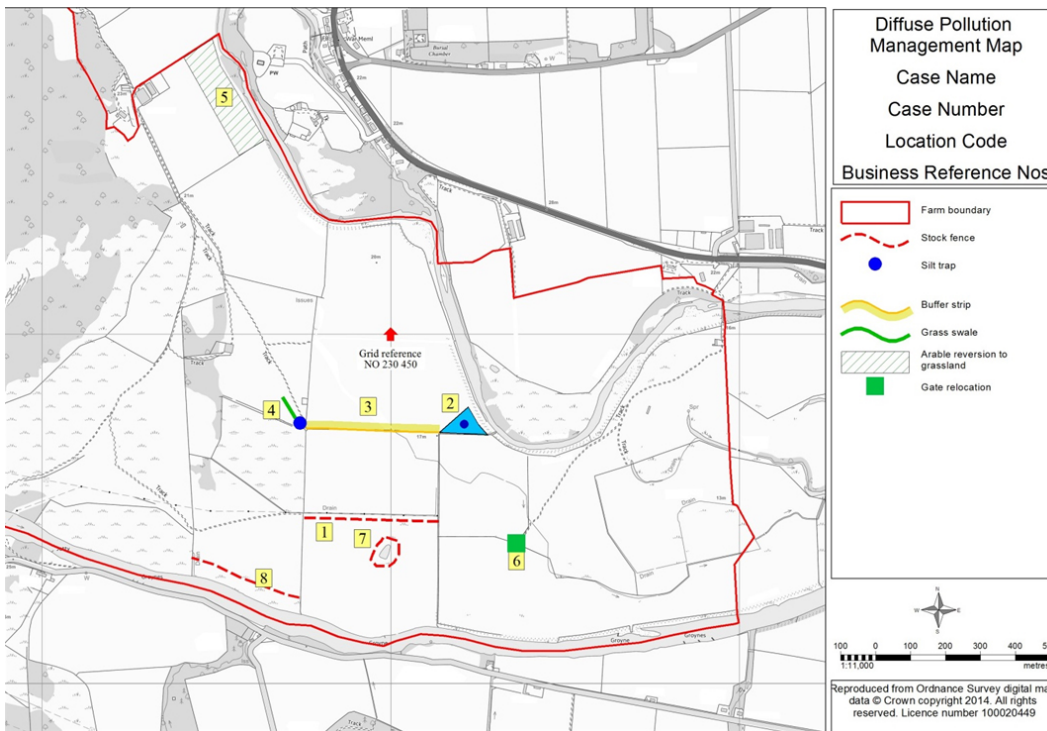
		- Stocking rate low - continue to monitor area and take action if poaching occurs
2	Low corner of arable field. Run-off exit point. Risk of causing erosion in lower field and eroded soil entering burn	- Rural sustainable drainage system - sediment traps and bunds - Rural sustainable drainage system - pond - Creation of low input grassland to convert arable land at risk of erosion of flooding - Grass strip in arable field
3	Arable field sloping towards burn	- Grass strip in arable field
4	Risk of run-off from track entering ditch	- Rural sustainable drainage system - sediment traps and bunds - Rural sustainable drainage system - swale - Livestock tracks
5	Long uninterrupted slope in arable field. Risk of soil erosion	- Grass strip in arable field
6	Gate close to burn. Risk of run-off from poached area around gate reaching burn	- Hardstandings for troughs and gateways - Rural sustainable drainage system - sediment traps and bunds
7	Grass field, cattle have access to pond. Risk of poaching or erosion	- Alternative watering facilities - Water margin in permanent grassland field - Continue to monitor area and take action if any poaching occurs
8	Grass field, cattle have access to ditch for drinking. Risk of poaching and erosion	- Alternative watering facilities - Water margin in permanent grassland field - Continue to monitor area and take action if any poaching occurs

Management map

On a map and using a similar approach to the risk assessment mark the various actions that are planned to deal with the identified diffuse pollution risks.

Number each of the actions on the map to show their location. On a corresponding table, describe the actions to be taken or the options to be applied for – see example map and table below.

As for the field map, you may not need to have a separate diffuse pollution management map if the actions can be clearly shown in the Farm Environment Management Map.



You can either complete the table below or incorporate the information within the map key.

Number of map	Action or option to be applied for (for guidance only)
1	Water margin fencing and alternative watering supply
2	Rural Sustainable Drainage System - Bund and Pond in corner field
3	Water margin
4	Swale and sediment traps to capture run-off from track
5	Grass strip in arable field
6	Move gate away from burn and create a hardstanding around gateway
7	Water margin with fencing and alternative water supply
8	Stocking rate low - continue to monitor area and take action if any poaching occurs

Diffuse pollution steading assessment

You must complete this if you are applying for any of the following options:

- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Pond
- Hard Standings for Troughs and Gateways
- Livestock Crossing
- Livestock Tracks
- Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Pesticide Handling Facilities
- Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon

You will need to produce a:

- Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment Map
- Diffuse Pollution Steading Management Map

Many of the diffuse pollution risks on a steading are associated with surface run-off and drainage. Good management of drainage at the steading can help to significantly reduce these risks.

When assessing diffuse pollution risks from the steading consider the points below:

	Points to consider	Potential options
Steading drainage	Are all guttering and down pipes working effectively?	
	Are there any opportunities to reduce the volumes of dirty water produced through improved clean and dirty water separation?	Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
	Are there any opportunities to incorporate rural sustainable drainage systems (RSuDS) to treat run-off currently discharging direct to a water course?	RSuDS – Swales RSuDS – Pond RSuDS – Wetland RSuDS – Sediment Traps and Bunds
Slurry storage facilities	- How many months slurry storage capacity have you got? - Would additional storage help reduce pollution risks on the farm?	Slurry Storage
	Were the slurry stores built before 1 September 1991? If yes, have they been significantly enlarged or reconstructed since then?	
Pesticide handling facilities	- Is the pesticide store of sufficient capacity, protected from frost and banded? - are there any drains or watercourses near the store that pesticide could enter if split?	Pesticide Handling Facilities
	Is the run-off from the pesticide mixing, handling and washdown facilities adequate to avoid any risks of pesticide entering a drain or watercourse?	
Silage clamps and silage effluent	- Are the silage making facilities adequate in terms of capacity, permeability and structural integrity? - Is there sufficient storage available to collect and contain silage effluent? - Are silage bales stored in at least 10 metres from watercourses and drains?	Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
	Is there a risk that run-off from silage bale storage area could enter a watercourse?	
Fertiliser storage	- Is the fertiliser storage area within 10 metres of a watercourse or otherwise pose a risk to the water environment? - Are liquid fertiliser tanks positioned and protected to minimise risk from accidental damage	
Oil storage	- Are the fuel tanks adequately bundled? - Are there any watercourses or drains nearby?	

Diffuse pollution steading assessment map

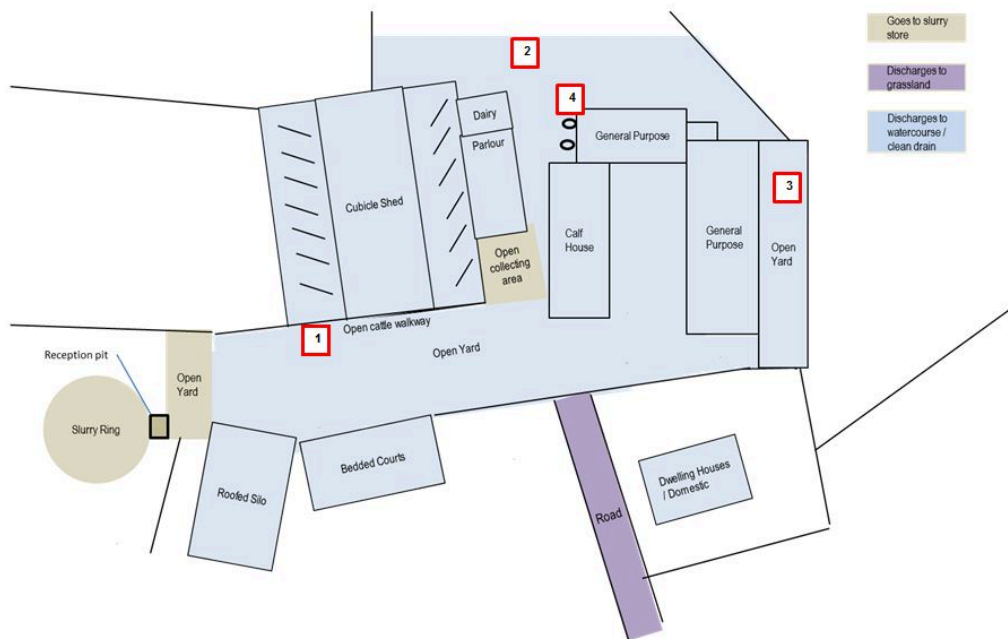
Using an appropriately scaled map of the steading, identify areas which produce:

- clean roof run-off and lightly contaminated yard run-off that currently discharges to a watercourse or clean water drain
- run-off that discharges to grassland
- midden run-off and run-off from open silos and indicate where the drainage goes
- dirty yards and run-off from silos and other drainage that discharges to the slurry or effluent store

Further information on identifying drainage types can be found within the guidance for the option – [Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#).

The map will help to identify areas of the farm where steps could be taken to help reduce the volumes of dirty water produced and reduce pollution risks.

Below is an example of how your map may look.



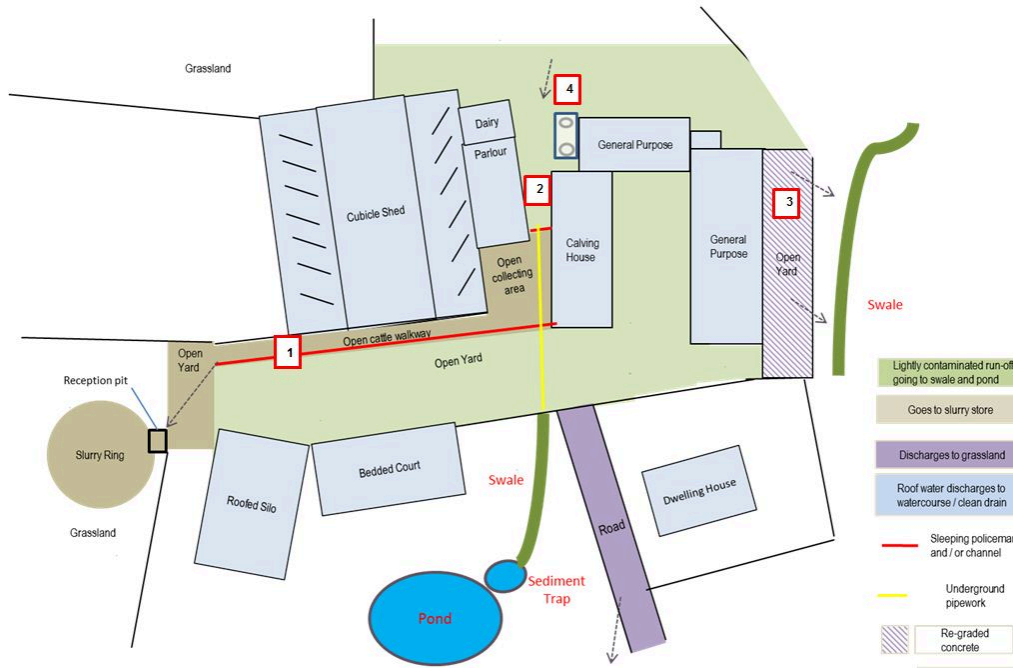
Opportunities for improvement

Produce a list of any diffuse pollution risks identified and what improvement could be made to reduce diffuse pollution risks, see example table below:

Number on map	Diffuse pollution risk / opportunity	Action or option
1	Cattle walkway discharging to clean drain	Use clean and dirty water separation methods to prevent the slurry produced on the walkway from contaminating the clean yard below. Channel the slurry from the walkway to the slurry storage facility
2	Lightly contaminated yard discharging direct to clean drain	Opportunity to intercept this lightly contaminated drainage and discharge to Rural SuDS swale and pond
3	Lightly contaminated yard discharging direct to clean drain	Opportunity to re-grade this clean concrete yard area to allow the run-off to discharge to a swale and local grassland
4	Fuel store not banded	Bund fuel store

Diffuse pollution stearing management map

On another map of the stearing identify what works are proposed to take place to help improve the management of stearing drainage and the location of any rural sustainable drainage systems.



Number on map	Action proposed	Option selected
1	A sleeping policeman / ramp and a channel will be installed along the length of the cattle walkway to contain and collect the drainage from this area. The sleeping policeman / ramp will prevent the run-off from the walkway contaminating the clean yard below. The channel will collect the run-off and convey it to the slurry storage facilities.	Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
2	This clean yard area currently discharges direct to a watercourse via an existing clean water drain. A sleeping policeman / ramp will be installed to prevent the lightly contaminated run-off from the top yard flowing through the heavily contaminated collecting area. The lightly contaminated drainage from the top yard will then be collected and conveyed via a new gully and underground pipework to a new rural sustainable drainage system at the bottom of the yard	Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
3	This lightly contaminated concrete yard area which currently discharges to a field drain will be re-graded to allow the run-off to flow to local grassland	Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems RSuDS Swale RSuDS Sediment Trap RSuDS Pond
4	Bund fuel store	n/a

Diffuse pollution steading management – example table



[Diffuse pollution steading management table \(PDF, Size: 33.5 kB\)](#)

Blank template

Recent changes

Section	Change
whole page	various changes in text

[Field map](#)

Change or text from 'can' to 'must' concerning individually numbering points on the map.

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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12 Endorsements

Date published: 19 December, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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- [1.. Seeking endorsement for options or capital items outwith their target area.](#)
- [2. Seeking endorsement for Species-rich Grassland Management or Habitat Mosaic Management options in hill or upland rough grazing land](#)

[Recent changes](#)

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1.. Seeking endorsement for options or capital items outwith their target area.

Introduction

A new element in the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is that many management options and some capital items have been spatially targeted.

This means they will only be available in parts of the country where they will deliver the greatest benefit.

You can find out which options are available on the holdings that form part of your farm business using our targeting tool (link below). Please note that updates to spatial targeting may change the options that you're eligible to apply for.

[Targeting tool](#)

In exceptional circumstances, you may apply for a management option or capital item that is not targeted on your holding. However, you must meet the criteria for endorsement outside the target area, as shown in Table 1 (below) and you must obtain an endorsement before submitting your AECS application, as explained below.

Requests for endorsements should be made to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) or Scottish Forestry (SF), depending on the management option or capital item concerned.

Natural heritage designated sites

These include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Natura sites. Natura sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

If you wish to carry out management to benefit an SSSI and / or Natura site, you can apply for any management options (with the exception of the Hen Harrier Grassland Management option which is only available in Orkney) or capital items which will benefit the special features of the site, even if they do not appear on your list of targeted options.

This includes circumstances where the work that will benefit the site's features takes place on your holding but partially or wholly outside the site itself.

You will need to submit an endorsement from Scottish Natural Heritage with your application. This needs to confirm that the option or capital item you have chosen will benefit the features of the designated site.

You can visit the Scottish Natural Heritage [SiteLink website](#) to check the location of the designated site.

You are strongly advised to seek advice from Scottish Natural Heritage before drafting an application for a designated site. If you do not, and Scottish Natural Heritage has significant issues with the management you propose for the designated site, this may prejudice the success of your application.

[Contact Scottish Natural Heritage](#)

If you include ineligible items in your application it will be rejected and you should first read the scheme guidance on [designations](#) before applying.

You should also read the terms and conditions laid out in [How to Apply](#) guidance.

How to request an endorsement

If you wish to seek an endorsement then you must submit a request to Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Forestry.

You will need to request an endorsement in plenty of time, to ensure Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Forestry have time to assess it and respond to you before the AECS application window closes.

If you are permitted an endorsement, you must submit this with your AECS application.

Please use the form below if you are requesting an endorsement from Scottish Natural Heritage.



[Request to SNH for endorsement of a management option or capital item \(MS Word, Size: 135.5 kB\)](#)

Please contact SF directly for further information on its endorsement process.

Check Table 1 below to see whether the management option or capital item you wish to apply for this year is listed and to check which organisation to contact. Only those management options or capital items listed in Table 1 will be considered for endorsement.

In the [SNH endorsement request form \(PDF, Size: 135.5 kB\)](#), you are asked to explain briefly how each option or capital item meets the criteria for endorsement. Scottish Natural Heritage or Scottish Forestry will clarify whether you need to provide any further evidence.

In most cases the endorsement will confirm that the options you have selected are eligible, will benefit the objectives of management and that the location in which you wish to carry out the management is appropriate.

Table 1

Management option or capital item	Criteria for endorsement outside target areas	Endorsing organisation
Management or Restoration of Hedgerows	The hedgerow has been created under a legacy agri-environment scheme	SNH
Unharvested Conservation Headlands for Wildlife	Presence of corn buntings according to existing records	SNH
Wader Grazed Grassland Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland	<p>You must meet one of the criteria below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you have provided evidence, from records held by an independent national wildlife organisation (e.g. RSPB), that curlew, lapwing or redshank have been recorded breeding on the proposed management areas in at least one breeding season within the last five years <p>(Where data does not exist for the proposed management area then you may commission independent surveys to establish that curlew, lapwing or redshank were breeding in the proposed management area in at least one breeding season before seeking an endorsement)</p> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - alternatively, you have provided evidence you are part of a wader project <p>For either of the above, you must supply a completed vulnerable priority species recording form (PDF, Size: 146.1 kB) setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which waders you are targeting 	SNH

	- on which LPIDs - the evidence of the target wader species recorded on each LPID	
Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland within spatial target area for Corn Buntings Mown Grassland option	You may apply for endorsement to adopt the Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland option instead of the Corn Buntings Mown Grassland option if you provide a statement from local RSPB staff confirming that there are no nesting corn bunting that would be affected by the earlier cutting dates. You must include this statement when submitting the endorsement form to SNH.	SNH
Moorland Management Stock Disposal Away Wintering Sheep Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle	Presence of a habitat on your holding that would benefit from management under one or more of these options, including blanket bog and wet heath	SNH
Tall-herb Vegetation Management	Presence of tall herb vegetation which would benefit from management under this option	SNH
Control of Invasive Non-native Plant Species	The land on the holding is part of an area-wide, coordinated strategy for controlling invasive plants, or you are first land manager in your area to have the plant species on your land	SNH
Rhododendron Control	The land on the holding is part of an area-wide, co-ordinated approach for controlling a whole population of rhododendron; and work is essential to control or prevent invasion of a notable site (Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest or ancient semi-natural woodland site); and/or necessary to secure another investment in controlling a population of rhododendron	SNH/SF
Any management option or capital item to benefit a designated site (SSSI or Natura site)	The choice and location of option(s) and/or capital item(s) will benefit the feature(s) of the designated site	SNH
Any management option or capital item to benefit pearl mussels	The choice and location of options and/or capital items will benefit freshwater pearl mussels out-with a designated site	SNH

2. Seeking endorsement for Species-rich Grassland Management or Habitat Mosaic Management options in hill or upland rough grazing land

Please use the form below to submit a request for endorsement after taking account of the criteria in Table 2.



[Request to SNH for endorsement of a management option or capital item \(MS Word, Size: 135.5 kB\)](#)

Table 2

Management option	Criteria for endorsement	Endorsing organisation
Species rich grassland Habitat Mosaic	If the land proposed for management under either option is hill and upland rough grazing, you can only apply for these options if you are awarded an endorsement from SNH.	SNH

	<p>The endorsement application requires you to provide supporting evidence that target habitats are present, by submitting either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Phase 1 habitat survey that demonstrates the presence of the target habitats, <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an existing National Vegetation Classification survey demonstrating the site contains the target species <p>This evidence must accompany your Endorsement form.</p>	
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Recent changes

Section	Change
1. Seeking endorsement for options or capital items outwith their target area.	New section title and updated SNH Endorsement Form. Also updated various links throughout section.
2. Seeking endorsement for Species-rich Grassland Management or Habitat Mosaic Management options in hill or upland rough grazing land	New section title and updated SNH Endorsement Form.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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13 Application assessment

Date published: 16 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Initial assessment

Once an application is received by the due deadline it will be assigned to a case officer from RPID or Scottish Natural Heritage to assess against the Scheme requirements.

The initial assessment process is broken down into two stages:

- stage one – completion of basic application eligibility checks
- stage two – completion of full application eligibility checks and the assessment of the selected options and /or capital items

Stage one Assessment

This requires the case officer to answer the first seven questions in the application eligibility checks, to ensure the application meets the basic scheme eligibility requirements.

A failure at this stage will result in an automatic rejection of the application and it will not progress to stage two for the further detailed assessment.

Applicants will be issued with a letter setting out the reasons for rejecting the application.

Application eligibility

If an applicant is not satisfied with our decision, they may wish to ask us to undertake a formal review. [Further information can be found here.](#)

Stage two assessment

The case officer works through the remainder of the eligibility questions and also assesses the eligibility/suitability of each option and capital item applied for.

This part of the assessment will include a discussion with the applicant and may also include a site visit.

In order for the application to progress, case officers must be satisfied by the end of the visit / discussion that the applicant has an understanding of the option requirements and how the plan will fit with their current land management.

For example, stock exclusion dates versus forage requirements.

By 'applicant', we mean any individuals responsible for delivery of the contract.

For Agri-environment schemes, this could be, for example, be the farmer / crofter, the farm manager or the estate factor.

It is unlikely that the agent completing the Agri-environment Climate Scheme application is going to be the individual responsible for day-to-day management of the contract.

If a site visit is carried out, this may include a check of the accuracy of submitted maps, the eligibility of certain options or site linkage across the holding.

Previous non-compliance with the Rural Priorities scheme will be checked prior to any site visit and we will wish to discuss and address any issues with the applicant to ensure this isn't repeated under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme.

Your application will then be scored using the appropriate scoring criteria:

- [scoring criteria for Agri-Environment Climate Scheme](#)
- [slurry storage scoring criteria](#)

Applicant's comments

If an on-site visit is undertaken, the applicant will be invited to enter comments and sign the report.

The signature is recognition of the fact that the applicant was present at the site visit and the comments are an accurate record of what was discussed.

If a site visit is not undertaken and a discussion is held by telephone, the case officer will record a brief description of the main points discussed. An electronic copy of these comments can be made available to the applicant on request.

Types of acceptable amendment

Only small changes to a submitted application can be made by the case officer after the application deadline has passed and the assessment process is underway, for example:

- correction of Land Parcel Identifiers (LPIDs). For example, where a hedge is proposed between two fields and the wrong LPID is used
- correcting typographic or arithmetical errors
- transposition errors, for example mixing up numbers like 3, for 8 or 5

What we cannot accept is amendments or submission of missing documentation for an application which fails the basic eligibility checks at Stage one.

And, for applications that reach Stage two, we cannot accept the wholesale change of the plan, or significant amendments.

This would include removal of ineligible options or changing the location of options because the applicant has not understood what was being applied for at the time of application.

For example, removing a field from the open-grazed grassland option because insufficient land has been left clear for grazing livestock or changing a field from one management option to another.

If significant changes are required, the application is will be deemed as not up to standard and will be rejected.

We therefore strongly advise you to consult with RPID or Scottish Natural Heritage before submitting your application, if you have any queries; for example, regarding land eligibility for particular options.

Final assessment

Once all applications are scored, budgetary restrictions may result in some applications with the same score being approved whereas others are part approved or rejected.

If that is necessary, each application with the same score will be examined locally or by the National Project Assessment Committee and a judgement made on which applications are approved, part approved and rejected.

Applicants will be notified of the decisions reached and (where applicable) be provided with the reasons why an application is part approved or rejected.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Full page	Whole page updates to reflect two stage assessment process

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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14 Scoring criteria

Date published: 18 January, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Note – the scoring criteria for Improving Public Access is on a [separate page](#).

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Agri-Environment Climate Scheme scoring criteria

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use to assess all Agri-Environment Climate Scheme applications.

The slurry storage element of applications will be scored separately. Targeted slurry storage scoring criteria, agreed with SEPA, can be found below.



[Slurry storage scoring criteria \(MS Excel, Size: 14.1 kB\)](#)

Criteria for slurry storage

Where applications are purely for organic options, we will assess them in the first instance using the 'scale of delivery' and 'national priorities' criteria for comparison against other stand-alone organic applications.

The score sheet template is available separately for download (see below).



[Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet \(PDF, Size: 228.1 kB\)](#)

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet

Scale of delivery

In-bye and moorland management

The more land on your holding that you propose to manage under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme in comparison to the total area of your holding, the more points you will be allocated.

We will separately assess the proportion of in-bye and the proportion of moorland being managed in your application in relation to the total areas of in-bye and moorland on your holding.

We will allocate points on a sliding scale depending on the percentage managed.

Diffuse pollution risks

Where diffuse pollution risks are identified within the [Farm Environment Assessment](#), the more of these you address through Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management, the more points you will be allocated.

We will only carry forward the highest score between either in-bye, moorland or diffuse pollution risks.

National priorities

We will allocate extra points for applications which help to deliver at least one of the following national priorities:

National priorities
Protected nature sites: enhancing the condition of designated features of SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites
Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species
Climate change: enhancing carbon stores through peatland restoration
Water environment: contributing to the 'good status' of water bodies under the Water Framework Directive
Organic farming: maintaining or increasing the area of organically managed farmland in Scotland

Protected nature sites: Enhancing the condition of designated features of SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites

You will be allocated points if you meet all of the following requirements:

- your application includes land on or adjacent to a designated site
- the proposed management is likely to benefit the features of the designated site:
 - a 'feature' is a habitat, earth science interest or species population which has been identified as of particular importance in the citation for the designated site
 - 'benefit' means maintaining the features in favourable condition, or helping the features to recover if their condition is unfavourable, for those parts of the features that are under your control
- the application includes the management of your land, which is on or adjacent to a designated site, which is required to benefit the features present on the designated site, and which is within your control

Information on sites and features can be found using [Sitelink](#). You are strongly advised to [contact Scottish Natural Heritage](#) to discuss your designated site proposals, before preparing an application.

Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species (VPS)

You will be allocated points if your application will directly benefit the population of at least one of the following vulnerable priority species (for farmland waders, your application must benefit at least two species in the table below).

Additional points can be scored if the management proposed will benefit additional vulnerable priority species.

You must refer to the Vulnerable Priority Species supporting guidance pages to ensure you meet the species specific [criteria](#) .

You must submit a [Vulnerable Priority Species recording form \(PDF, Size: 137.8 kB\)](#) containing the information requested below with your application. Failure to do so will result in no points being awarded in this category.

Farmland waders – the application must directly benefit at least two of the following wader species.

The species selected must include curlew and / or lapwing.

- curlew
- lapwing
- oystercatcher
- redshank
- snipe

Other species with significant Scottish population declines which depend on appropriate management.

- corncrake
- corn bunting
- chough
- twite (on in-bye only)
- black grouse
- hen harrier
- marsh fritillary
- great yellow bumblebee
- great crested newt
- freshwater pearl mussel

In order to score points under this criterion, you must

- confirm that the management option / capital item proposed is within the appropriate mapped zone for the vulnerable priority species or, in the case of freshwater pearl mussel, associated with one of the key rivers named
- include management options and / or capital items in your application which will benefit the species, located appropriately within the holding, as indicated in the [Supporting guidance for each vulnerable priority species](#)

Climate change: enhancing carbon stores through peatland restoration

You will be allocated points if you meet both of the following conditions:

- your application includes management to restore peatlands using one of the following capital items:
 - [Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams](#)
 - [Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams](#)
- the management will be undertaken within a peatland area



[Peatland area map \(PDF, Size: 2.4 MB\)](#)

Peatland area map – national priorities

If you are unsure whether your holding is within this area, please contact your [local RPID office for advice](#).

Water environment: contributing to the 'good status' of water bodies under Water Framework Directive

You will be allocated points if your application will contribute to improving water quality in one of Scotland's diffuse pollution priority catchments or focus areas.



[Diffuse pollution priority area for SRDP \(PDF, Size: 1.3 MB\)](#)

National priority: water environment

Applications should:

- be supported by a [Farm Environment Assessment](#) to identify diffuse pollution risks and target options appropriately
- include measures needed to address all diffuse pollution risks on the land holding (or justify why not)

Organic farming: maintaining or increasing the area of organically managed farmland in Scotland

You will be allocated points if at least 25 per cent of your permanently held land will be managed under the 'organic conversion' sub-option, or at least 75 per cent will be managed under the 'organic maintenance' sub-option.

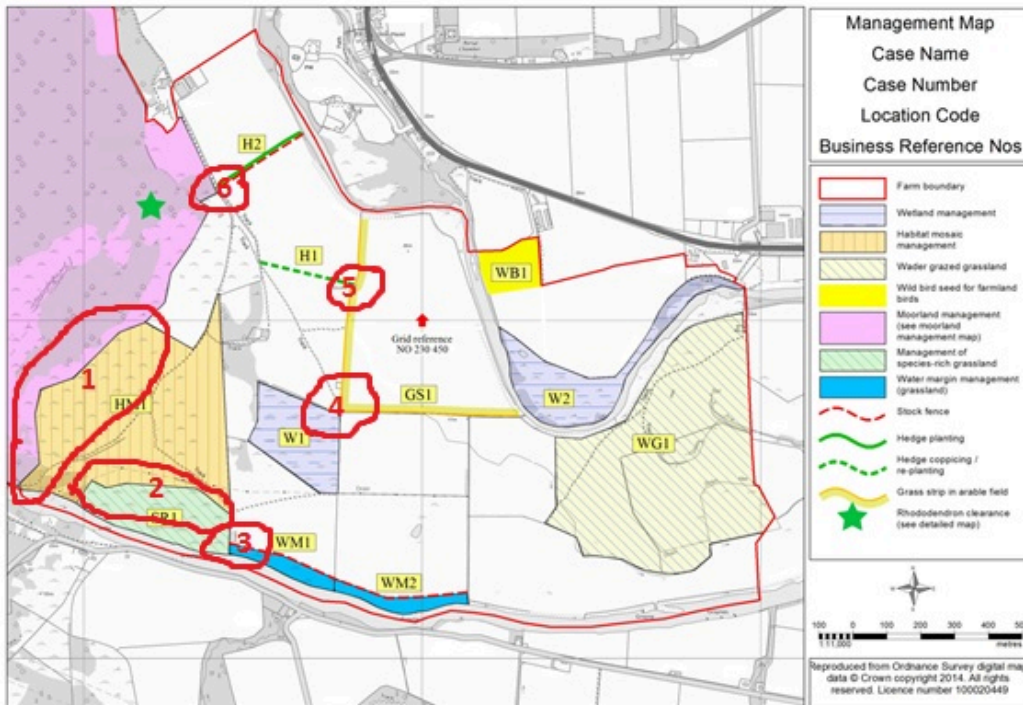
[Habitat linkage](#)

This recognises that managing habitats across a holding where there is linkage between them can provide additional benefits, for example by creating wildlife corridors.

We will assess that linkage across the holding and allocate points accordingly. The greater the linkage across the holding the more points will be allocated.

The habitats may already exist and not be proposed for specific funding under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme but so long as the habitats are marked on the farm environment assessment map and an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option links those habitats together, then a score may be justified. See further guidance below.

For example,



In this case example, there are 6 habitat linkages as a result of habitats proposed for management in the application (noting that there could be other linkages with existing habitats which would be taken into account as well).

They include the following examples;

- moorland linked to inbye habitats such as habitat mosaic, species rich grassland
- habitat mosaic linked to species rich grassland linked to water margin
- wetlands linked by grass strip in arable fields
- grass strip in arable fields linked to hedgerow management

While this criterion is about the creation of physical linkage of sites, if you can make a fully justified case for site linkage across a holding where the sites are not physically linked then points may be allocated.

You must demonstrate additional environmental benefit beyond what would otherwise be achieved as individual standalone sites.

For example, pockets of species rich grassland, habitat mosaic or wetland where you have evidence that Marsh Fritillary butterfly has been present in the areas proposed for management. This species usually exists in discrete populations dispersed across pockets of habitat containing its favoured food plant: devils bit scabious. Habitats can be within a 2 – 5km radius e.g. within a glen or coastline containing predominately cattle grazed pasture.

Habitat linkage across neighbouring holdings

If habitat linkages across neighbouring holdings are being claimed then the holdings involved need to be part of a collaborative application that meet the collaboration scoring criteria.

Links with open or running water

Any connection between open or running water and an adjacent habitat, which is being managed as part of the AECS proposal, will count towards the habitat link score.

Where habitat links should not be counted

Hedgerows or woodlands between fields managed as wader grazed or mown grassland do not qualify for habitat linkage points as in these situations shrubs and trees attract wader predators and therefore can be detrimental to waders.

It is best practice not to site boundaries of habitats managed for waders less than 30 metres from a hedgerow or woodland edge and so there should not be a physical link between these two types of habitat anyway.

Habitat linkages should be between different habitats. Where the same habitat is made up of more than one adjoining LPID this would be considered to be a single habitat area and therefore links between the LPIDs making up the habitat area should not be counted.

Long-term benefit

This is designed to recognise that some options deliver environmental benefit for a period longer than the duration of the contract.

Points will be allocated if the following criteria are met.

One or more of the following options or capital items will qualify for long term benefit points:

Managing water quality and flood risk options

- converting arable at risk of erosion or flooding to low-input grassland
- management of floodplains
- creation of species rich grassland
- restoration of species rich grassland
- wetland management, where the proposal is to create a new wetland

For the species rich grassland and wetland options listed above, these need to be adjacent to a water course or water body in order to demonstrate improvements to water quality or flood risk mitigation.

For the avoidance of doubt, fencing to create a water margin will not qualify for long term benefit score.

Structural works

- Hard Standings for Troughs and Gateways
- Livestock Crossing
- Livestock Tracks
- Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Pesticide Handling Facilities
- Restoring (Protecting) River Banks
- River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems - Pond
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems - sediment trap and bunds
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems - swales
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems - wetland
- Water-use Efficiency - Irrigation Lagoon
- Wetland Creation - Field Drain Breaking
- Wetland Creation - Pipe Sluices

Restore dykes: greater than 5% of the dykes on the holding must be restored under the application to score points. This will be an assessment of dykes as recorded on the Farm Environment Assessment maps.

Planting dune grasses: capital item.

Creation/Restoration of wetland or species rich grassland (minimum 1 ha)

Qualifying options/capital items are:

- creation of species rich grassland
- restoration of species rich grassland
- wetland management, where the proposal is to create a new wetland

Capital works benefitting peatlands and moorlands

Qualifying options/capital items are:

- ditch blocking - peat dams
- ditch blocking - plastic piling dams
- heather restoration
- non-native invasive species, rhododendron or bracken control where the entire extent of the species cover in the managed area is proposed to be removed

Value for money

This recognises that management of habitats delivered at a lower capital infrastructure cost provides better public value for money than those applications which require higher capital infrastructure costs. In other words, more money is spent on management of habitats than on associated capital items.

Small unit applications under the value of £20,000 delivering at least one national priority will attract additional points under this scoring criteria in recognition that applications of this size can offer value for money but otherwise not score highly against other criteria.

We will deduct points under this criteria when assessing applications greater than £20,000 on a sliding scale depending on the percentage of capital infrastructure compared to total application costs.

We also recognise that there are some standalone capital options that should not be considered in this calculation as they deliver significant environmental outcomes in their own right.

The only capital items to be included in this value for money calculation are:

- [Stock Fence](#)
- [Deer Fence](#)
- gates of any sort
- restoring drystone or flagstone dykes

Collaborative approach

This recognises that collaboration between applicants can lead to better environmental outcomes, for example by delivering management at a landscape scale.

To be awarded points for collaboration, the person leading on the collaborative project must correctly complete a Collaborative Management Plan (using the template below) along with a map or maps clearly showing the extent of the collaborative work proposed.

[Collaborative Management Plan \(PDF, Size: 21.7 kB\)](#) .

The Plan must be agreed with all parties involved. It must list all participants and must clearly demonstrate the contribution each participant applying to AECS will make.

You can apply for funding towards the cost of the plan, as explained in the [Claims and Payments webpage](#).

A copy of the completed Plan and map(s) must be submitted by each AECS applicant involved in the collaborative project, along with their AECS application.

Those identified as collaborating partners must be AEC Scheme participants or applicants (unless the collaborative project is to be carried out by a third party – see below*).

The initial collaborators must apply in the same year; however, once they have contracts in place, other land managers may join in later years.

Points will be allocated on a sliding scale according to the number of collaborators. Whilst older AECS contracts can be included in the general information about a Collaborative project, only AECS contracts arising from 2018 applications and applications submitted in 2019 will be considered for collaboration points this year. This is due to the fact that contracts must be run concurrently to ensure activities are being undertaken collaboratively over the lifetime of the contract between all farms.

Simply referencing a neighbouring applicant also managing land under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme will not be sufficient to score points under this criterion.

Collaborative Management Plans must demonstrate that there will be greater environmental benefit than would be achieved if the individuals involved were to act independently.

For example, extra benefit due to creating contiguous and complementary management and improving habitat connectivity.

It is also desirable for the collaborative project to include any of the following:

- involves the sharing of resources (e.g. staff time and machinery)
- contributes to a strategic environmental management plan
- involves an existing group of land managers with a track record of working together

Below are further examples of situations which may be relevant to collaboration, as long as they also meet the requirements noted above.

1. Taking part in an existing partnership project e.g. a wader management project
2. Holding sits within and likely to contribute to a strategic landscape scale planning area e.g. a river catchment management plan
3. Part of a species management plan e.g. Deer Management Group – Deer Management Plan Area
4. More than one applicant working together to increase the area of habitat for a local population of one of the vulnerably priority species e.g. Black grouse or Corncrake
5. More than one applicant managing either side of a single area of habitat like a wetland, species rich grassland or bog
6. More than one applicant collaborating over the same management activity e.g. predator control, shared grazing, muirburn
7. Applications made under a Contractual Licence involving multiple partners. For example, an NGO applying to carry out a catchment-scale project for control of Invasive Non-Native Species on land belonging to multiple RPID registered businesses. Each participating land manager would be considered a collaborator.

*If you are a third party applicant, with a contractual licence to carry out collaborative capital works on a number of land holdings, you will be the sole AECS applicant for the collaborative project. Your Collaborative Management Plan must identify the land holders involved and points will be awarded for each participating land manager provided they are also signed up to the contractual licence and have a valid Business Reference Number.

Additional points

This is a section designed to provide flexibility to allocate points for certain activities that improve the environmental outcomes delivered by an application.

Spatial priorities

Applications for certain management options will score additional points if they are within priority areas, where management will deliver an increased benefit.

The following management options and capital items will score additional points within priority areas for water quality, as shown in the map.

- [Water Margins in Arable Fields](#)
- [Water Margins in Grassland Fields](#)
- [Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland](#)

- [Management of Floodplains](#)
- [Alternative Watering](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Pond](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland](#)



[Priority areas for water quality map \(PDF, Size: 1.3 MB\)](#)

Priority areas for water quality map

The following management options will score additional points within peatland areas:

- [Moorland Management](#)
- [Stock Disposal](#)
- [Away Wintering Sheep](#)



[Peatland area map \(PDF, Size: 2.4 MB\)](#)

Peatland area map – spatial priorities

The predator control management option will score additional points within the range of the declining black grouse population in the south of Scotland.



[South of Scotland black grouse map \(PDF, Size: 452.1 kB\)](#)

South of Scotland black grouse map

If you're not sure whether your holding is within these areas, please [contact your local RPID office](#) for advice.

Scheduled monuments

If management through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme will protect or reduce the risk of deterioration to certain Scheduled Monuments, verified by Historic Environment Scotland, then additional points may be awarded to recognise the outcome being achieved.

Applicants will be informed if a relevant Scheduled Monument is present on their holding on the Targeting web page. [Click here to visit the Targeting page](#), where you will be asked to enter your holding code.

Management options may be specified under this heading which can be used to benefit the Scheduled Monument.

You will score additional points if you propose to benefit the Scheduled Monument by undertaking these management options and / or any relevant capital items, as endorsed by [Historic Environment Scotland](#).

Recent changes

Section	Change
Collaborative Approach	Points will be allocated on a sliding scale according to the number of collaborators. Whilst older AECS contracts can be included in the general information about a Collaborative project, only AECS contracts arising from 2018 applications and applications submitted in 2019 will be considered for collaboration points this year.
Additional points	South of Scotland Black Grouse targeting map has been updated

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15 Funding under this scheme

Date published: 8 December, 2017

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Introduction

Funding under the scheme falls into two categories:

- annual payments for management options
- payments for capital costs

(Payments are also available for Farm Environment Assessments and Collaborative Management Plans - for more details please refer to the [“Claims and Payments”](#) webpage)

Annual payments

You will get annual payments for [management options](#) in your contract. If your application is successful these payments will be set at a standard cost in your contract as per the standard rates detailed in the management options.

Capital items

[Capital items](#) are one-off activities that can be claimed for and paid once they have been satisfactorily completed. Virtually all capital items are considered on the basis of a standard cost, as shown within the rules for each individual capital item.

Any capital expenditure incurred before your application to the scheme has been submitted is not eligible.

Actual costs capital items

There are three exceptions to standard costs, where actual costs may be used instead.

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)
2. Scheduled Monuments located on designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites)
3. Other capital items where there are no standard costs available

For actual cost capital items the [guidance on quotes must be followed](#).

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites

The Scottish Government is committed to bringing designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites) into favourable condition. In certain circumstances the standard payment rates for capital items are unlikely to cover the real costs of the works for these sites.

These circumstances include:

- remoteness of the area of land on which the work will be undertaken or awkward / rough terrain getting to site – for example island location, lack of local contractors resulting in travel and subsistence for contractors during the works, longer time to access work site, difficult to deliver materials
- awkward, rough or fragile terrain on site making it necessary to, for example, use specialist contractors, work at a slower rate, avoid disturbance to neighbouring areas, use matting to protect ground
- other conditions – for example vegetation removal from a large area of cliff which has very small area on a map

In such exceptional circumstances we will consider supporting higher, actual capital costs, where all of the following conditions apply:

- these activities support action on, or adjacent to, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites (designated sites) aimed at bringing the special features of interest into favourable condition, or maintaining favourable condition of features. Your case officer will confirm this with relevant staff in Scottish Natural Heritage
- you provide an adequate demonstration of the circumstances which justify why the standard payments rates are not sufficient. For larger projects, where there are different distinguishable elements, you may have to use standard costs for those elements for which you cannot provide an appropriate justification for the use of standard costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes
- you provide a comparison with the standard payment rate for the same activity, which demonstrates that the cost of undertaking the required activity is significantly higher than this

You should discuss any such proposals with your local Scottish Natural Heritage office at an early stage before submitting your application, to ensure that what you are proposing is appropriate for the designated site features so that you can confidently proceed to getting quotes for the work

A specification for each activity is provided below:

- [Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams](#)
- [Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Light Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Intermediate and Heavy Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody vegetation – Removal from Site of Cut Vegetation](#)
- [Matting to Prevent Damage to Bogs](#)
- [Moving or Realigning Ditches](#)
- [Deer Census – Helicopter Counts](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for Deer Management](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised or Chemical](#)
- [Manual Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Mechanised Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Foliar Spray / Treatment](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Stem Injection Eradication – Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Scare and Temporary Electric Fencing](#)
- [Stock Fence](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Stock Fence](#)
- [Rabbit-proofing an Existing or New Stock or Deer Fence](#)
- [Deer Fence](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Deer Fence](#)

2. Scheduled Monuments located on designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Natura sites)

In certain circumstances we will consider supporting higher, actual capital costs where the method of work required to avoid damaging a Scheduled Monument site is complex and can be justified as incurring a higher financial burden.

For higher actual costs to be considered under such circumstances, all of the following conditions apply:

- these activities, in the form of one of the capital items listed below, support action on, or adjacent to, Scheduled Monuments on designated sites which aim to have a long term positive benefit / impact on the environment and the condition / management of scheduled monuments
- you should include a letter of support from Historic Environment Scotland as certain works require scheduled monument consent Your case officer will confirm this with relevant staff in Historic Environment Scotland
- you provide an adequate demonstration of the circumstances which justify why the standard payments rates are not sufficient. For larger projects, where there are different distinguishable elements, you may have to use standard costs for those elements for which you cannot provide an appropriate justification for the use of standard costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes

- you provide a comparison with the standard payment rate for the same activity, which demonstrates that the cost of undertaking the required activity is significantly higher than this

You should discuss any such proposals with Historic Environment Scotland at an early stage before submitting your application, to ensure that what you are proposing is appropriate for the site so that you can confidently proceed to getting quotes for the work.

A specification for each activity is provided below:

- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Light Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Intermediate and Heavy Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody vegetation – Removal from Site of Cut Vegetation](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised or Chemical](#)
- [Manual Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Mechanised Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Foliar Spray / Treatment](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Stem Injection Eradication – Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rabbit-proofing an Existing or New Stock or Deer Fence](#)

3. Other capital items where no standard costs are available

There are seven capital items where no standard costs are available and you will have to claim actual costs. These are:

- [Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- [River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- [Restoring \(Protecting\) River Banks](#) (engineered log jams)
- [Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#) (installation of kerbs / channels / cross drains)
- [Pesticide Handling Facilities](#) (drive-over biobeds)
- [Alternative Watering](#) (electrical powered pump system)
- [Alternative Watering](#) (water trough)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Actual costs capital items	New section added regarding scheduled monuments

Previous versions

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16 Double funding and option incompatibility

Date published: 21 March, 2019

Introduction

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

There are two different situations where double funding may happen:

- through different Agri-Environment Climate Scheme options or legacy grant schemes
- by funding agri-environment options that are used to meet Greening requirements under the Basic Payment Scheme

Double funding between and within agri-environment schemes or other grant schemes can arise:

- where two or more similar options are funded on the same area of land, through a contract under this scheme and a contract under another scheme*, with the result that the same activity is funded twice
- where two incompatible options are funded under this scheme on the same area of land. For example, Wetland Management and Management of Buffer Areas for Fens and Lowland Bogs

*other schemes can include Rural Priorities, Land Managers Options, SNH management agreements, SNH Goose Schemes.

Compatible and incompatible options

In order to claim payment for an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option it must be compatible with everything else that is declared or claimed for the same piece of land. This includes:

- other options from the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme or the Forestry Grant Scheme
- continuing claims under other schemes (see above *)

Examples of incompatibilities are:

- an option that is only eligible on grass and an option only eligible on a crop
- two options where the management requirements, such as grazing dates, are in conflict

If you currently receive payments under other schemes, such as Rural Priorities or Land Manager Options, you can still submit an application for this scheme on the same piece of land.

However, this can only be done when the management options you are applying for are compatible with your existing commitments under the other schemes and do not relate to similar activity that is already being funded under these legacy grant schemes.

Identifying incompatible options between and within agri-environment schemes

The following spreadsheet can be used to check if options are compatible with each other. It can also be used to check if options are compatible with land uses and Ecological Focus Area options.



[Compatibility checker \(MS Excel, Size: 356.5 kB\)](#)

When entering options into your application you will get an error message if the options do not all fit within the land parcel because they are not compatible.

For example, if you have a five hectare land parcel on which you enter five hectares of Agri-Environment Climate Scheme - Wader Grazed Grassland and you already have four hectares of Rural Priorities - Wild Bird Seed you will get the following error:

"The Wader Grazed Grassland option is applied for on the Land Parcel AB/12345/12345. However, the total proposed area of all option(s) for 2017 in this application and any previous contracts on this Land

parcel is 9.0 ha which is more than the BPS Eligible Area of 5.0 ha. The Show LPID details link displays all area based option/capital items on this Land Parcel. Please reduce the area on this Land Parcel to clear the error or suppress the error and add the appropriate comments."

If you were to enter one hectare of Agri-Environment Climate Scheme - Wader Grazed Grassland and you already have four hectares of Rural Priorities - Wild Bird Seed you would not get an error as the system assumes these options are on separate pieces of land and will both fit within the five hectare land parcel.

There may be some options that are compatible only under some circumstances. These will be recorded as incompatible and will create an error. When submitting your application you have the ability to justify the error and add the reason.

This should be only done with confirmation from an Rural Payments and Inspection Division area office that the options are compatible.

Dealing with double funding or incompatible options

It is possible that contracts may be issued that result in double funding, which is only found at inspection or when the case is given further scrutiny.

In all cases where a double-funded activity is identified, or an incompatible option, it must be removed from your contract and any payment previously made for such activity under that contract will be recovered.

If we decide that we need to vary your contract, we will send you a letter. It will give you:

- a written explanation of the reasons for the proposed variation
- the opportunity to make written representations about the proposed variation

Contract variations

You should forward any written representations to your case officer within 28 days of the date of our written notification to vary your contract.

The case officer will then forward your representations to the scheme manager to consider.

If you don't respond within the 28-day period, then we will write to you again confirming that we will make the variation to your contract and recover payments as appropriate.

Payments for all other funding you receive may be delayed if you do not reply.

Double funding of agri-environment options linked to Greening requirements under the Basic Payment Scheme

If you claim for an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option that also helps you meet the Ecological Focus Areas requirements of the Greening payment – as part of your Basic Payment Scheme claim – you cannot be paid twice.

To avoid this, we have identified options in this scheme that are of a similar nature to Ecological Focus Area activities.

This is relevant to:

- land managers who want to use an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option to meet their Ecological Focus Area requirements
- organic land managers, who are exempt from undertaking Ecological Focus Area activities due to land being certified as organic that would otherwise be required to carry out an Ecological Focus Area activity if they were not organic and who manage an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option that delivers Ecological Focus Areas requirements

Ecological Focus Area comparison

Agri-environment measure	EFA practice	Direct payments weighting factor
Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds	Fallow	1

Beetlebanks	Fallow	1
Water Margins in Arable Fields	Buffer strips	1.5
Water Margins in Grassland Fields	Buffer strips	1.5
Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland	Fallow	1
Creation, Restoration or Management of Hedgerows	Hedge	10m2 or 5m2

If you choose to use all or part of one of the above Agri-Environment Climate Scheme options to meet your Ecological Focus Areas requirements, we need to remove the income foregone element from your agri-environment payment.

This will be done by assessing if the areas claimed for the Agri – Environment Climate Scheme options are on the same areas as used to meet the Ecological Focus Areas requirements. Your Greening payment will not be altered.

We will check this each year before paying your agri-environment options. If the options include management costs (as well as income foregone) these will be paid.

If you have any additional agri-environment commitments similar to Ecological Focus Area practices, payments for these will not be reduced. If you meet your Ecological Focus Areas requirements through other activity not covered by an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme contract, then your payments will not be affected.

This approach will also be adopted for organic farms who, without the Greening exemption, would otherwise be required to carry out Ecological Focus Areas activity.

Deductions for double funding will be made if an organic farm undertakes one of the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme options that are of a similar nature to an Ecological Focus Areas practice.

The double funding rules do not affect the land managers conversion or maintenance payments. Land managers who claim for the Basic Payment Scheme but who do not need to meet Ecological Focus Areas requirements and those who receive no funding under Pillar 1 will face no reduction in payments for this scheme.

This is because there is no risk of double funding.

These rules will apply to new contracts from 2015 onwards and to existing Rural Priorities and Land Manager Options agri-environment contracts which started on or after 1 January, 2012 and 15 May, 2012 respectively.

This is because these contracts include a revision clause which allows for commitments to be adjusted to the legal framework of the new Scottish Rural Development Programme.

If these beneficiaries do not accept the adjustment, they may terminate their contract without penalty. Rural Priorities and Land Manager Options contracts entered into before these dates will be unaffected by these rules because their contracts do not include the revision clause.

Additionally, Rural Priorities and Land Manager Options beneficiaries without a revision clause in their Rural Priorities and Land Manager Options contracts can use their options that are of a similar nature to an Ecological Focus Area and be paid in full. For further information on Greening requirements in relation to agri-environment options within these schemes, contact your local area office.

Practical example of dealing with double funding linked to Greening

A land manager with 100 hectares of arable cropped land who needs to meet the Ecological Focus Areas requirement on five per cent of their arable land (five hectares).

The land manager has commitments to manage seven hectares of wild bird seed for farmland birds under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme.

He chooses to use five hectares of the wild bird seed to meet his Ecological Focus Areas requirement.

Wild bird seed is one of the compatible options that is of a similar nature to Ecological Focus Area fallow. The management option payment calculation for Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds is based entirely on income foregone, with a separate capital item to establish the wild bird seed

The Ecological Focus Area weighting factor for fallow is one. Therefore, to meet the Ecological Focus Areas requirement, the land manager must declare five hectares as fallow on his annual Single Application Form declaration.

Under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, the land manager still claims the full seven hectares of wild bird seed annual management payments.

When the claim is being processed, the claim is restricted to the balance of the wild bird seed not used to support the Ecological Focus Areas (7.00 hectares – 5.00 hectares = 2.00 hectares).

Double funding will therefore be avoided. The capital item associated with establishing the wild bird seed habitat will be paid in full. If the land manager has other agri-environment commitments of a nature similar to Ecological Focus Areas practices these will not be reduced.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Identifying incompatible options between and within agri-environment schemes	Compatibility checker updated

Previous versions

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17 Management diaries and advice on calculating stocking densities

Date published: 21 December, 2017

If you are awarded a contract under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, you will find that, for a number of management options and capital items, you must keep an up-to-date diary to record the management activity you undertake.

Management diaries for your contract will be sent to you at the beginning of each year. This should ensure that we can take account of any mapping changes that occur over the period of your contract and provide you with the most up-to-date information. You must complete the official diary that you are sent and have this available at inspection.

If your contract is varied part way through the year you can request an updated management diary, however, if you want to continue to use your original diary please ensure that you update it with the new LPID numbers and areas.

The diary will contain the management requirements for each of the relevant management options and capital items in your contract.

The diary must be completed each time you undertake any action that relates to the management of the option. For example, dates of establishing [Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds](#) or dates when grass has been mown.

When entering stock information for fields with a grazing plan, you must adhere to the grazing regime detail, (which defines livestock units, livestock type and grazing dates), contained in your approved grazing plan.

You may be asked to make the diary available to us at any time of the year. If we inspect your holding, the inspector will check that the diary is accurate and up to date. You should also have your grazing Plan to hand to show the inspector.

The inspector will also check that the information entered confirms that the correct management has been undertaken.

Failure to complete the diary or the recording of inaccurate information may lead to reduction or recovery of some or all payments. Please see the [Breaches and Penalties Guidance](#) for more details.

An example of a completed management diary can be found below.



[Management diary example \(MS Word, Size: 118.3 kB\)](#)

example of an agri-environment climate scheme management diary

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

How to calculate stocking density

Several management options require stocking density to be recorded in the management diary as part of the “activities” within a land parcel.

This section provides information on how to correctly calculate the stocking density.

The number of livestock units should be calculated using the information below:

Livestock units

Livestock Type	Number	LU per animal	LU
Number of bulls, cows and other bovine animals over two years		x1.0	=

Number of equine animals over six months		x1.0	=
Number of bovine animals from six months to two years		x0.6	=
Number of bovine animals below six months		x0.4	=
Number of sheep		x0.15	=
Number of goats		x0.15	=
Number of breeding sows > 50KG		x0.5	=
Number of other pigs		x0.3	=
Number of laying hens		x0.014	=
Number of other poultry		x0.03	=
		Total LU	=

Stocking density

Total Livestock Units (Total of LU column)	=	LU
Total Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) Eligible Area (For details of how to calculate your BPS eligible area click here)	=	Ha
Stocking Density (Total Livestock Units ÷ Total BPS Eligible Area)	=	LU/Ha

All livestock maintained on the area in question, including other stock, should be included in the calculation.

The stocking density is arrived at by dividing the total number of livestock units by the eligible area (in hectares).

So, for example, if a Land parcel has 23 eligible Ha and contains: 50 ewes, 10 cows, 6 heifers (26 months old) and 10 calves (8 months old), then the following calculations apply:

$$50 \text{ ewes} * 0.15 \text{ LU} = 7.5$$

$$10 \text{ Cows} * 1.0 \text{ LU} = 10$$

$$6 \text{ heifers (26 months old)} * 1.0 \text{ LU} = 6$$

$$10 \text{ calves (8 months old)} * 0.6 \text{ LU} = 6$$

Then the stocking density of the land parcel is

$$(7.5+10+6+6)/23 \text{ Ha} = 1.28 \text{ LU/Ha}$$

This stocking density should be within the range stated in the grazing plan. Any time stock are added or removed from the land parcel, the event should be recorded (indicating what livestock was moved) and the new stocking density should be calculated.

Grazing plans that utilise more than one land parcel at the same time

If you have a grazing plan that uses more than one land parcel at the same time, then when livestock are added or removed, the detail of the event (including stocking density update) should be recorded for each of the land parcels being utilised.

So, if stock can move freely between three different land parcels then each time that stock are added or removed you should specify on each of the three land parcels the details of the stock added or removed and record the new stocking density.

LPIDS entered into AECS management run with adjacent fields

In these instances, make clear in the diary where LPIDs are run together and calculate the stocking density based on the total hectareage available to graze.

Recent changes

Previous versions

Section	Change
Whole page	Minor text changes

[Previous versions of this page](#)

18 Inspections

Date published: 6 January, 2016

To see recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of this page](#).

If your application to join the scheme is successful, you will be subject to our inspections programme. This is based on the European Commission's regulatory requirements, which are provided below:

- under Article 32 of the EC Control Regulation 809/2014 there is a requirement that at least five per cent of beneficiaries who have annual recurrent commitments (agri-environment and forestry – except establishment) under the Scottish Rural Development Regulation (SRDP) must be selected for an on-the-spot inspection each year.
- under Article 50 of the EC Control Regulation 809/2014 there is a requirement that at least four per cent of the public expenditure on capital items declared to the Commission each year and five per cent of the public expenditure over the whole programming period must be selected for an on-the-spot inspection each year. These capital items will be inspected prior to payment of the final claim.
- under Article 48 of the EC Control Regulation 809/2014 there is a requirement that there is a 100 per cent administrative check (invoices) on all investment operations (capital items) and this check should include an on-site visit to the holding, except for smaller investments.
- under article 52 of the EC Control Regulation 809/2014 there is a requirement that at least one per cent of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) expenditure under a five-year commitment be selected for an ex-post inspection (after the final payment).

As part of the on-the-spot compliance inspections, Cross Compliance checks will be carried out on one per cent of all beneficiaries of agri-environment, animal welfare, first afforestation on agricultural land and forest-environment payments. The selection sample will be based on a Cross Compliance risk analysis.

Cross Compliance inspection selection

It is a condition of entry to this scheme that you must allow us to inspect your holding to check that the scheme rules are being met.

Inspections to check compliance will be carried out on a percentage of claims, chosen by risk analysis, prior to payment. Inspection visits will be co-ordinated by the relevant organisations to help reduce disruption at your farm or business.

Ex-post inspections for capital items are designed to ensure that the item is still there and being used for the purposes it was funded. Such checks may be undertaken at any time during the monitoring period, which is five years from the final payment.

Award holders are therefore required:

- not to make any modification or change that will substantially affect the nature, usage or location of the capital item purchased
- not to sell, exchange give away or otherwise dispose of the capital item purchased

without the prior written approval of the scheme administrators.

Further information

More details on the types of inspections undertaken are available.

[Inspections](#)

Recent changes

Change

Information added on the articles under [EC Control Regulation 809/2014](#) that govern inspections.

Information added on [ex-post inspections](#) for capital items.

[Previous versions](#)

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19 Contract variations

Date published: 14 March, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

Variations to Agri-Environment Climate Scheme contracts fall into two categories.

These are:

- variations initiated by beneficiaries
- variations initiated by scheme delivery partners – Rural Payments and Inspections Division and Scottish Natural Heritage

Variations initiated by beneficiaries

If, once your Agri-Environment Climate Scheme contract has been issued, you find you are unable to keep to the expected timetable of capital works, the areas or lengths needed are slightly different to what was expected, and / or you are unable to manage a particular area as planned in your original application, a variation may be considered to allow changes to the schedule of works included within your contract.

You must notify your case officer or local area office in writing by letter or email **as soon as possible** if you become aware that a change is needed to your contract - see 'Changes must adhere to the following general principles' section below.

Any difference between your claim and your contract could result in a delay in your payment so it is essential that variation requests are made ahead of claims.

Changes may also occur:

- between approval and contract signing (pre-signing adjustment), or
- after you have signed and returned your contract (contract variation)

Changes must adhere to the following general principles:

- if the adjustment to the timing of works proposed changes the claim year, or the particular areas to be managed, there must be an exceptional circumstance or something unforeseen that has caused the delay or change. This is particularly important given the limited budget available for the programme period and because, unfortunately, we cannot transfer unspent funds from one financial year to another. **Variation requests will normally only be accepted for consideration in these circumstances where the request is received before the claim year (01/01 to 31/12) shown on the Schedule of Work for the option/item affected by the variation, has ended.**
- the proposed change must not affect the delivery of the contract
- the effect of the change must not bring an application score below the approved scoring threshold or remove the reason for approving the application below the threshold. Any variation request that takes the application score below the approved scoring threshold will be subject to scrutiny to assess if the work initially proposed was simply to attain a higher score. A request to remove that work after approval may be considered as a circumvention to attain approval and will likely result in the contract being withdrawn, with previous payments associated with that contract being recovered
- if a contract is changed after a land inspection or claim adjustment there should be no overall increase in the total area for an option, or length / area / quantity for a capital item approved in the original contract. We may consider it acceptable to 'balance' different areas of management of the same option where some are found to be larger than expected and others found to be smaller than expected

Variations must be submitted in writing by letter or email, and once considered can be:

- approved in full
- approved in part
- rejected

Types of acceptable variations

It is expected only the following types of variation will be considered:

- changes to timing of work / claims due to exceptional weather conditions that prevent the project from proceeding as planned or other circumstances outwith the control of the applicant – depending on consideration of the full circumstances
- force majeure (as defined by Article 2(2) of EC Regulation 1306/2013)
- adjustments to reduce the amount approved in the contract, for example, fencing or other standard capital items not required to achieve the desired outcome. We may consider it acceptable to 'balance' different areas of management of the same option where some are found to be larger than expected and others found to be smaller than expected (hedge A reduced from 100 m to 90 m and hedge B increased from 200 m to 210 m)
- correction of Land Parcel Identifiers (LPIDs)
- correcting typographic or arithmetic errors
- transposition errors. For example, mixing a '3' for an '8' or '5'
- application details affected by delays in issuing the contract
- application details affected by changes to scheme guidance after the application was formally submitted
- where a standard cost capital item has been deferred due to exceptional circumstances the associated first year's management must be deferred
- you may request to move areas of management if there are sound environmental reasons. This is especially true if the type of management undertaken can produce the same benefits on different areas of land. This is allowed in the context that many options specifically allow the rotation of options. You will need to clearly demonstrate why you require to deviate from the original application. Each request will be considered on its merits

When variations are not allowed

- variations to contracts are not allowed if they reduce the ability to deliver the selected national targets or if they stem from mismanagement. For example, requests to remove or substantially reduce options entered into the application in order to secure ranking points
- requests made following notification of an inspection
- requests to swap the value of unused items for others not included in the initial application. For example, swapping a fence gate for a stile
- requests to include new options or capital items. These should be included in a separate application
- requests to move or defer agri-environment areas not managed due to errors that were caused by you when completing the application process. If you have not managed an area because of an omission or error on your part (for example, sown in an inappropriate crop), this cannot be varied.

Notification of decision / beneficiary's liability

Once your variation request has been considered you will be notified whether your request has been successful in full or in part or if it has been rejected.

If a variation is accepted and is the result of pre-signing contract adjustment, you will receive two copies of the revised contract, including adjusted schedule of works, maps and additional conditions (where applicable). You will also receive a revised management diary if the changes applied affect the details in the diary.

If a variation is accepted and is the result of post-contract signing variation, you will receive two copies of the adjusted schedule of works, maps and additional conditions (if any of the maps and / or additional conditions have changed following the variation) and two copies of the signing pages. You must return one complete signed set of documents to your local office, confirming you are content with the details in the varied contract.

If you reject the variation then the originally approved contract still stands. If you do not comply with the original or amended contract, you risk being found in breach of contract. This may result in recovery action with penalties being applied and / or your contract being withdrawn.

[Variations initiated by scheme delivery partners – Rural Payments and Inspections Division and Scottish Natural Heritage](#)

The Rural Payments and Inspections Division and Scottish Natural Heritage have the legislative authority to vary a contract at any time, including any additional conditions, whether or not at the request of the beneficiary.

For example, a variation may be carried out by a member of staff processing the application where errors are found, e.g. wrong Land Parcel Identifiers (LPIDs) in the original schedule of works. It may also be required following the inspection or processing of claims.

[Management diaries](#)

If your contract is varied part way through the year you can request an updated management diary. However, if you want to continue to use your original diary please ensure that you update it with the new LPID numbers and areas.

[Management diary page](#)

[Recent changes](#)

Section	Change
Variations initiated by beneficiaries	Clarification regarding contract variations

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20 Breaches and penalties

Date published: 17 June, 2017

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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- [Management Items – over-declaration of area](#)
- [Cross Compliance](#)
- [Capital and Management Items – breaches of agreement](#)
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If you do not follow your contract terms and conditions we will call this a breach.

A breach may be identified through the automatic checking we carry out against your application, claim, land or allowances, through an inspection or following a check of any supporting documentation relating to a claim.

It is your responsibility to ensure that all contract conditions are fulfilled and that all information in your application and claim is accurate.

If you have breached your agreement, future grant payments will be reduced or withheld and sums previously paid will be recovered.

The scheme is subject to different provisions in the European Union regulations depending on whether your contract has management or capital items as described below.

Capital Items – over-declaration of expenditure

These items are covered by Article 63 of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 809/2014 and Article 35 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 640/2014

Under Article 63, once we receive your capital claim we will establish:

- (a) the amount that you are due based on what you have claimed and
- (b) what you are due after an examination of the eligibility of the expenditure of your claim and supporting documentation

If what you have claimed exceeds what you are due after the examination of your claim by more than 10 per cent, an administrative penalty equal to the difference between the two amounts will be applied to the amount that you are eligible to be paid.

For example, if you have an item in your contract approved for £1,000 but you submit a claim and invoices for £1,200, your eligible costs will be £1,000 with a penalty of £200 which means that you will receive a payment of £800.

The maximum reduction we can impose is 100 per cent of the claim. For an explanation of Article 35, see the section headed Capital and Management Items.

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Management Items – over-declaration of area

These items are covered by Articles 16, 19 and 35 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 640/2014

The management items in your contract are claimed as part of the Single Application Form and must comply with the rules of the Single Application Form.

In accordance with Article 16, if you fail to declare all the land you have on your Single Application Form and there is a difference between the total areas declared and the total land that you should have declared, your payment will be reduced as below:

Difference between land that is declared and what is found	Size of penalty
Up to 3% of the area determined	No penalty
More than 3% and up to 20%	1%
More than 20% and up to 50%	2%
More than 50%	3%

In accordance with Article 19, over-declarations are calculated at crop-group level. A crop-group is formed of all areas which receive the same rate of aid under the same measure. If, within a crop-group, we find a difference between the area declared and the area found, your payment will be adjusted as below:

Size of over claim	Size of penalty
Up to 2 hectares or 3%	No penalty – payment will be reduced to area determined
More than 2 hectares or 3% but not more than 20% of the area determined	Twice the difference of the over claim
More than 20% but not more than 50% of the area determined	No payment will be made on the crop group
More than 50% of the area determined	No payment will be made on the crop-group and a further penalty will be added based on the difference between area declared and area found

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Cross Compliance

Any breach of cross-compliance rules anywhere on your holding may result in a penalty being applied. In most cases, this penalty will be applied to all area-based payments being claimed.

You can find out more about Cross Compliance using the link below.

[Cross Compliance](#)

Capital and Management Items – breaches of agreement

In accordance with Article 35, we will refuse or withdraw in full or in part any support, both for capital and management items, in cases of non-compliance or where the eligibility criteria or the conditions and obligations of your contract have not been met. This includes your commitment to complete a management diary.

If we assess that there has been a serious non-compliance, the support will be refused or withdrawn in full. You will also be excluded from the same measure or type of operation for the calendar year of the finding and for the following calendar year.

For commitments extending over a number of years, breach actions will result in a reduction and/or recovery being applied to amounts paid in previous years as well as the current year.

In determining the level of reduction we will consider how the breach should be classified against the following factors:

Classification	
Severity	The severity will depend on the importance of the consequences of the breach taking into account the objectives of the agreement or option
Extent	The extent will depend on the effect that the non-compliance has on the agreement as a whole and reflects the amount of agreement breached

Duration	The duration shall depend on the length of time the effects of the breach lasts and whether it is possible to rectify the breach by reasonable means
Re-occurrence	A breach will be determined as a re-occurrence where similar non-compliances have been found during the last four scheme years

The maximum reduction in any one year is 100 per cent of the option payment. Please see the below matrix to see how non-compliance will be treated.



[Breaches matrix \(PDF, Size: 88.6 kB\)](#)

A matrix displaying how breaches will be treated



[AECS Management Diary non-compliance matrix \(PDF, Size: 160.4 kB\)](#)

Matrix displaying penalties for non-compliance

If we seek to recover payments from you, we will write to you explaining why, with the amount due which will also include interest. Interest will begin to accrue from 60 days from the date of our letter and will continue to accrue until the time of repayment.

The letter will also give advice on how to appeal our decision. You will have 60 days from the date of this decision letter to either repay or to seek a review of the decision. If you do neither by the 60 day deadline, we will offset your debt from future payments from any SRDP scheme within three calendar years following the calendar year of the finding of the scheme breach.

More information on appeals can be found in the following appeals section.

[Appeals](#)

We may accept that you may have been prevented from meeting certain obligations of your contract due to a force majeure event. Force majeure relates to exceptional circumstances. Examples of a force majeure event are:

- the death of the scheme beneficiary
- the long term incapacity of the beneficiary
- a severe natural disaster gravely affecting the holding
- the accidental destruction of buildings such as slurry stores
- an epizootic or a plant disease affecting part or all of the beneficiary's livestock or crops respectively

To seek an exception to any withdrawal of support or financial penalty on the grounds of force majeure, you must write to your area office within 10 working days of the event happening. You should send us as much evidence as you can to support your case, including proof that the event occurred. Each case will be considered on its merits.

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Section	Change
Capital and Management Items – breaches of agreement	We've updated the AECS Management Diary non compliance matrix

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21 Claims and payments

Date published: 19 March, 2019

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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Making a claim

Claims for payment can be made either by you as the scheme beneficiary or an accountable person acting on your behalf.

This accountable person will need to be mandated on the [PF05 - Business mandate form](#) before we can accept a claim from them on your behalf.

Although an accountable person can claim on your behalf, any errors on the claim which may result in us seeking to recover payments or impose a financial penalty will be applied against you as the holder of the contract. So it is in your interests to make sure that any claim submitted is correct.

You can only claim for the items set out in your contract once your work has been completed. Any difference between your claimed amount and the amount scheduled on your contract could result in a delay to your payment and / or penalties being applied.

If, once you receive authority to start work, you find that you are unable to keep to the expected timetable of capital works, the areas or lengths needed are slightly different to what was expected and /or you are unable to manage a particular area as planned in your original application, you must request a variation before making your claim.

[Variations guidance](#)

There are four types of claims available:

- claims for Farm Environment Assessment, including associated claims for certain specialist plans
- claims for Collaborative Management Plans
- claims for Management Options
- claims for Capital Items

Further details on each are provided below.

Farm Environment Assessment

If your application to the scheme requires you to include a [Farm Environment Assessment](#), you will be able to apply for funding to help with the cost of the assessment.

If you have had an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) produced for your farm funded through the Farm Advisory Service, you cannot make a claim towards the cost of completing the FEA component of your application. This would constitute double funding.

You will be restricted to one claim per management unit during the period of the scheme.

We will only make an exception to that restriction if you have widely separated areas of land, normally at least five miles apart, where further claims can be submitted for a separate Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application.

A claim for funding can be submitted at any time after you have submitted your application for the scheme (see below for a claim form). Payment is not dependent on the success of your application; however, we will only reimburse you where your Farm Environment Assessment is fit for purpose

You can claim the following, depending on the size of the area covered by your assessment:

- for areas up to and including 50 hectares in size, a payment of £200
- for areas greater than 50 hectares and up to and including 200 hectares in size, a payment of £400
- for areas greater than 200 hectares in size, a payment of £600

You can also claim a supplementary payment for the following specialist plans:

- for lowland bog management plans covering 10 hectares which includes two or more sub-plans, a payment of £300. A grazing plan has been incorporated within the Lowland Bog Management Plan template. This section will count as a sub-plan
- for moorland management plans covering more than 300 hectares which include two or more sub-plans, a payment of £600. The grazing plan has now been incorporated within the Moorland Management and Grazing Plan template. This section will count as a sub-plan

[PF15 - Farm environment assessment, specialist plans and Collaborative Management Plan claim form](#) - use this form to claim for your Farm Environment Assessment.

Collaborative management plans

If you are formally collaborating with other applicants and have submitted a Collaborative Management Plan you may apply for £100 towards the cost of the plan. Payment is not dependant on the success of your application; however, we will only reimburse you where your Collaborative Management Plan is fit for purpose.

This amount should be claimed individually by each applicant involved in the collaboration.

If you are a third party applicant with contractual licences to carry out capital works on a number of different land holdings and this work is providing a collaborative outcome, then you should make a single claim based on the number of land holders listed in your submitted Collaborative Management Plan (for example, £300 for three land holders, £400 for four landholders, etc).

The [Scoring Criteria](#) webpage has more details about collaboration.



[PF15 - Farm environment assessment, specialist plans & Collaborative Management Plan claim form \(PDF, Size: 72.0 kB\)](#)

Management options

To make a claim for annual management options in your contract you must declare the land on which you undertake these options on the Single Application Form using the Permanent Land Data Sheets (IACS3).

The Single Application Form can be submitted online through [registering and logging in to Rural Payments and Services](#). Using the online service provides benefits such as:

- 24-hour access and an instant receipt
- much of the form is pre-populated
- the system can check for errors in your application
- can save time and expense as there is no need to travel to your local office or post a claim
- gives you up-to-date information on the progress of your claim

If you choose to complete the Single Application Form on paper, it should be submitted to your local area office.

The deadline for the receipt of a Single Application Form will be 15 May, 2019.

We will still accept your form up to 25 calendar days after the closing date but will reduce your payments for all schemes covered by the Single Application Form, including this scheme, by one per cent for each working day your form is late during the 25 calendar day period.

We cannot accept your form if we receive it more than 25 calendar days after 15 May, 2019.

If you fail to declare your management options on your Single Application Form you will not receive payment for your management options for the year in question.

You should not assume that because you have a contract that you are under no obligation to claim. Your contract is not a claim for payment.

You should refer to your schedule of works when completing your Single Application Form but you should only claim for work that has been completed.

It is your responsibility to complete the Single Application Form correctly with your management options declared even if you employ an accountable person to act on your behalf.

Capital items

Capital investments are available to support environmental objectives such as fencing, hedges, dyking and habitat creation.

Capital items can be supported on either a standard cost or actual cost basis.

For both, you can only claim for the area / length / quantity actually completed and you cannot exceed the amounts indicated in your contract or exceed what is on the ground. If you or your accountable person claim for work that has not been completed we will consider this as an overclaim and breach penalties may apply.

For example, if you have an LPID in your contract for a scheme year for 600 metres of fencing then you must claim all of the 600 metres in one claim.

You cannot claim for 400 metres on one claim and 200 metres on another claim at different dates. You must wait until the entire length / area of an item in a LPID is complete before you submit a capital claim

Any capital expenditure incurred before your application to join the scheme has been submitted will not be eligible for payment.

All capital claims will be paid in full.

You do not need to submit invoices with standard cost items but you do need to submit fully receipted original hard-copy invoices for actual cost items providing the following details:

- suppliers name and address and VAT registration number if appropriate
- claimant's name and address which should be the business name in the approved contract who is the scheme beneficiary
- detailed description of services provided or goods supplied, separately costed, to include serial numbers for any equipment purchased
- date on which the services or goods were supplied
- total amount due for payment by the customer with the VAT element clearly detailed
- amount paid with details of any discount awarded which fully explains the difference between the amount due and the amount paid
- date paid
- method of payment used
- business stamp or signature of person receiving payment on behalf of the supplier

In addition, when you submit a fully receipted original invoice you must also back it up with other evidence of payment, such as:

- the original cleared cheque
- the original bank or credit card statement
- the original bank giro credit transfer slip
- an accountant's report
- a certified extract from the business accounts

If your invoices are paid by electronic banking we require a copy of the bank statements showing the defrayed expenditure and also copies of the electronic transaction between businesses.

Claims for capital items must be submitted by the end of February of the following calendar year, of the year stipulated in your contract.

So, if you have a claim year of 2019 in your contract, your claim must be submitted during 1 January, 2019 to 29 February, 2020. Additionally, all the capital works claimed must be completed by 31 December 2019.

The financial amounts in your contract for the year in question cannot be transferred to another financial year.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit your claim by the deadline set-out in this guidance. We will not write to you in advance of the closing date to remind you.

If you submit a claim after that period it will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances which prevented your claim being submitted. If you receive notification that we will not accept a late claim for payment you can contact your area office to discuss.

You will not be able to submit a request to review this decision under the Rural Payments (Appeals) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 as the regulations do not apply in these circumstances.

If you are unable to undertake the work in the year designated in your contract then you must write to us requesting a variation. Please see further guidance in the variation section.

To make a claim for capital items, use [PF16 - AECS capital items claim form](#). Guidance on completing the form is also available.

Payments

Payments will be made as follows:

- Farm Environment Assessments, Specialist Plans and Collaborative Management Plans – these will be paid upon receipt of a completed claim and after it is checked against your application
- management options – these are paid annually in the spring of the year following submission of your Single Application Form. For example, if you submit a claim in 2017, your management payment will be paid in the spring of 2018 once all the inspections for annual management measures have been completed
- capital items – these will be paid upon receipt of a valid claim with any relevant supporting documentation. A valid claim is a claim that is wholly completed and signed and encloses all supporting documentation as required

Payments will only be made once all administrative checks have been carried out on the claim to ensure that the work claimed is suitable, matches what is in your approved contract and that the claim has been completed correctly.

If your claim has been selected for inspection, your claim will only be paid once the inspection has been carried out and the inspection result is satisfactory.

It is a condition of the scheme that you must allow us to inspect your holding to check that the scheme rules are being met.

[You can find out more about inspections here](#)

You will receive payment by BACS into your nominated bank account. All payments will be made in sterling. We aim to have your payment into your bank account within 10 days from the date we authorise the payment.

If you change your bank account you must inform us as soon as possible by completing [PF03 - Register your bank details - sterling](#) form to avoid payments being issued to your closed account.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Collaborative Management Plans	New information added
PF15 form	Document updated
Whole page	Dates updated throughout for 2019

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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22 Contract succession

Date published: 13 January, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

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Introduction

A succession takes place when:

- an individual or business gives up the ownership, occupancy, tenancy or contractual licence of land and/or capital items that are covered by an AECS contract to another IACS or legal business and
- the new owner or occupier agrees to take on some or all parts of the AECS contract

As part of this process, the individual or business leaving the land will be referred to as the 'outgoing' and whoever is taking on the land will be referred to as the 'incoming'.

Successions will be appropriate when contracts, which involve area related options managed over a period of five years, are to be transferred to an incoming, prior to the end of the five year commitment.

In this situation, the areas being managed will be transferred to the incoming for the remainder of the contract term as these areas will continue to provide environmental benefits.

Contracts solely for capital works - for example slurry store and Improved Public Access - are more complex.

Outgoing who own assets can sell these if they wish. However, they should not benefit from the sale of a capital asset funded by the taxpayer. Therefore, if assets which were grant funded are sold or transferred, recovery of the grant in full is the most likely outcome.

Where a succession is requested for a contract related to capital only, there must be some exceptional circumstances or force majeure which make the transfer of the grant aided project inevitable or unavoidable.

For example, long-term professional incapacity or the transfer of land subject to a contractual licence.

Change of occupier or transfer of land

If you have a contract as part of this scheme and decide to transfer, lease or sell all or part of land covered by the contract, you must let us know of this within three months.

You should do this in writing to either the Rural Payments and Inspections Division or Scottish Natural Heritage.

Contact details

For further information, see 'What the outgoing/incoming needs to do' below. If you, as the outgoing, fail to notify us within three months of the change of occupation, we may reclaim all or part of your AECS payments, with interest.

More information on breaches and penalties can be found in our dedicated section.

Breaches and Penalties

You cannot apply for land-based options on seasonal-held land, including arable, if your lease is for a period of less than a full year.

Types of succession

There are two types of succession:

- full transfer of AECS contract to a single or multiple incoming:

The incoming(s) agrees to take over the entire AECS contract and the outgoing has no further obligations under the AECS contract.

- partial transfer of AECS Contract to a single or multiple incoming:

The incoming agrees to take over some elements of the AECS contract – for example the original contract holder retains some of the land and is obliged to fulfil the remaining commitments of their AECS contract.

Full or partial transfer to tenants

If the incoming is a tenant but the tenancy agreement is shorter than the remaining period of the AECS contract, the owner or principal tenant (in the case of a sub-tenancy) and the incoming must undertake jointly to take over the succession.

The tenant and the owner or principal tenant must complete the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme landlord declaration form as well as any other documents required as per this guidance.

Landlord declaration form

Full or partial transfer between Contractual Licensees

If the incoming and outgoing are both contractual licensees then the incoming contractual licensee must supply a copy of the new contractual licence between themselves and the owner or principal tenant.

Where the duration of the licence does not cover the remaining period of the contract, a new landlord declaration must be submitted, as per the occupancy of land guidance.

What the outgoing and incoming need to do

The outgoing should notify their local RPID or SNH regional office, in writing, of the change of occupancy, within three months of the transfer of the lease or sale of part or all of the land covered by their AECS contract. This should be accompanied with the completion of the following forms:

- [Land Maintenance form](#) – to be completed jointly by outgoing and incoming giving us details of the land transferred or purchased. If not already IACS registered, the incoming will also need to register their business and any other land they occupy using this form
- [BACS form](#) – incoming registering for the first time must complete this form so that we are able to make payments
- [Succession Request Form \(SRF\)](#) – to be completed jointly by outgoing and incoming

Change of occupier before AECS contract is signed

Where an application is submitted by a business and occupancy of all or part of the land covered by that application passes to another business before the AECS contract undertakings are signed, the action to be taken depends on the transfer type:

- Full Transfer of AECS application

The details of the unsigned contract can be transferred to the new owner or lease holder. The incomer will not need to submit an AECS application but will take over and sign the contract initially intended for the outgoer.

This will be dependent on RPID and/or SNH being satisfied that the expected objectives will still be delivered, that the incomer meets all relevant eligibility criteria and that the full assessment of the application was successfully completed including the site visit/land manager discussion.

To allow this assessment process to get underway we would require the current applicant to provide us with the initial details of the outgoer/ incomer transfer including an indication of whether or not the incomer wishes to take over any potential contract.

This should be provided within the equivalent time frame to that set out at the 'What the outgoer and incomer need to do' section above.

If the incomer does wish to take over any potential contract we would require the Land Maintenance Form and Succession request form with any additional documents the incomer may need to support their eligibility to be submitted immediately after the outgoer has been notified that the application has been successful.

A written explanation would need to be provided if this notification period and forwarding of the necessary documentation has not been met.

- Partial Transfer of AECS application

The original application by the outgoer would be adjusted to remove the land subject to the succession and then reassessed by RPID or SNH. The incomer would need to submit an application covering the land they now occupy. Applications must be submitted by the closing date of any AECS application round still open or within the application window of future rounds.

Assessing a succession request

Following the receipt of the required succession documentation, the case officer will assess the succession request.

The case officer's decision will be based on the successful completion of the AECS contract to date by the outgoer* and the incomer's ability to meet the application and option eligibility criteria, (which is detailed in the AECS application guidance) and their ability to deliver the commitments in the outgoer's application / contract.

* Applicable where the contract has been signed by the original applicant (outgoer) and the authority to start work letter has been issued.

Part or no transfer of contracts

If the incomer does not wish to take on all or any elements of the AECS contract on the transferred or purchased land, then the outgoer may be liable to repay all or part of the payments received, with interest.

If the succession request form and associated documentation is not submitted to RPID or SNH within three months of sale or transfer, we may be obliged to reclaim all or part of any payments made, with interest, from the outgoer.

We would not seek recovery where we accept evidence from the outgoer that the reason for the incomer not taking on the undertakings meets the conditions of force majeure or exceptional circumstances. (LINK)

An example of this would be where a large part of a holding is compulsorily purchased and this could not have been anticipated at application stage.

Outgoer's obligations

If we agree the full succession of the contract to the incomer, and the incomer have agreed to take it on, we will issue you with confirmation that your contract has ended and that you have no further legal responsibilities under that AECS contract.

If we agree the partial succession of the contract to the incomer, and the incomer agree to take on part of the contract, the contract commitments will be split accordingly between the incomer and outgoer and all parties will have legal responsibility for their own contracts.

What can be claimed

Outgoer

If the outgoer occupied the land on 15 May and claimed the AECS annual recurrent options on their Single Application Form (SAF) that year, then they will receive the annual recurrent payments for that scheme year (year ending 31 December), provided the contract conditions are met.

If the outgoer has already submitted a capital claim, we will pay that to them provided that we received the claim before the date of change of occupier.

If any breaches are discovered at the time of a compliance inspection, we will apply any penalty to who ever made the claim.

Incomer

On or after the date of change of occupier, only the incomer will be entitled to claim payments for the transferred options, even if the work was carried out by the outgoer.

This is on the understanding that if the date of transfer to the Incomer is after 15 May in any given year, then any annual recurrent management grant payments, for that year, would be paid to the outgoer. If any breaches are discovered at the time of a compliance inspection, we will apply any penalty to whoever made the claim.

After a successful succession, your land maybe subject to option area and payment limits. For example, organic options are subject to a total limit of 1,000Ha per business. Within that, there is a 300Ha limit for arable land, improved grassland and fruit and vegetable taken together or separately.

Notifying you of our decision

Approval

- Incomer (full and part transfer)

The incomer will receive two copies of a full contract. The incomer must sign and date both copies returning one to the local RPID or SNH within 28 days from the contract issue date.

- Outgoer (part transfer to incomer)

The outgoer will receive two copies of their new schedule of works and map(s), if applicable, which details the commitments they have retained. A management diary, again where applicable, will also be enclosed. The outgoer must sign and date both copies returning one to the local RPID or SNH within 28 days from the contract issue date.

- Outgoer (full transfer to incomer)

The outgoer will get a letter to confirm transfer of contract to the incomer and that their responsibilities under the contract have ceased.

Refusal

If we refuse a succession request we will write to all parties involved to inform them of this along with any implications.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Change of occupier before AECS contract is signed	Guidance updated relating to full transfer of AECS application
Assessing a succession request	Guidance around the case officer's decision has been clarified

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)

23 Publicity

Date published: 7 December, 2016

To see the recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of this page](#).

As part of any successful application, you will be required to inform the public about the support you receive. How you do this may depend on how much you receive for your capital items.

For capital funding of any amount, you must place a short description about the project on any related websites, where a link between the purpose of the website and the support provided to the project can be established and highlighting the financial support received.

If you receive capital funding of more than €50,000, you must put up at least one poster or plaque with information about the project (minimum size A3) highlighting the financial support from the European Commission at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building at the holding.



[Example of A3 publicity poster \(MS Word, Size: 70.0 kB\)](#)

All plaques must include:

- the European emblem in accordance with the standards detailed in EU Commission Regulation 808/2014 Annex III Part 2
- the statement “The European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas”
- a description of the project which shall take up at least 25 per cent of the plaque

The emblem should be as per the standards presented on the [European Union website](#).

If you fail to erect a poster or plaque we may seek the recovery of payments made to you for the project in question.

For capital funding of more than €500,000 you must erect a billboard of significant size at a location readily visible to the public.

Examples of suitable wording for plaques and billboards:



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in Rural Areas

Providing moorland management for livestock and deer,
and seed and crops for farmland birds

Recent changes

Section	Change
Whole page	Clarification that publicity applies to capital funding. Increase in threshold for posters and plaques from €10,000 to €50,000. Additional requirement to erect a billboard for funding over €500,000.

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24 Withdrawing from the scheme

Date published: 30 March, 2015

If you want to withdraw from a scheme option that has a five year undertaking, you must write to your local area office immediately explaining why.

However, unless you can meet the force majeure or exceptional circumstances criteria, you will normally need to repay any payments you have already received plus interest.

You can find out more about force majeure or exceptional circumstances below.

Force majeure or exceptional circumstances

If you find you are no longer able to meet the conditions of your contract, you should write to your Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or case officer within 15 days of being able to do so.

You must explain the reason why and supply any relevant evidence.

You may have to pay back some or all of the payments we have made to you, plus interest.

However, we would not seek recovery where you can provide evidence that the reason for the failure meets the strict conditions of force majeure or exceptional circumstances.

The criteria for this is set out in European Commission Regulation (EC) No 1306/2013 – Article 2.2 – and could be one of the following:

- the death of the beneficiary
- long-term professional incapacity of beneficiary
- a severe natural disaster gravely affecting the holding
- the accidental destruction of livestock buildings on the holding
- an epizootic or a plant disease affecting part or all of the beneficiary's livestock or crops respectively
- expropriation of all or a large part of the holding if that expropriation could not have been anticipated on the day of lodging the application

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25 Reviews

Date published: 19 February, 2016

What is a review?

The review process is used when an applicant, or their agent, is not content with the approval decision relating to an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application. It may also occur where the contract offered does not include all of the management options or capital items that were originally applied for.

A complaint against the manner in which the assessment of the application has been handled should be considered through the appropriate complaints process.

[Complaints](#)

Requesting a review

If you are not satisfied with our decision, you may wish to ask us to formally review our decision. When reviewing a case, we can only consider the information that was originally submitted and will not consider new additional documentation.

To request a review you must submit a written request to the address provided in the decision letter or the contract offer, and within the timescale provided in the decision letter or the contract offer – quoting your case reference number.

The review request will be considered by an approving officer who was not involved in the original decision on the case. We aim to respond in writing within 28 days with a decision. This letter will either confirm, amend or alter our original decision and explain what the implications of the new decision will be.

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26 Appeals

Date published: 30 June, 2015

Updates to last version:

- the previous request for review form (RFR1) has been replaced with 'PF19 - Appeal on rural grant: Request for review form'

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Making an appeal

If we have written to tell you we have already – or soon will – refuse, reduce or recover your payment and you are not sure why we have made this decision, you should urgently contact your area office for more information.

[Contact us](#)

If after this you are not satisfied with our decision, you may wish to ask us to formally review our decision under the EU Rural Payments Appeals procedure.

To do this you must submit a written request to your area office no later than 60 days (legal timescale) from the date of our original decision letter on a request for review form (see below).

[PF19 - Appeal on rural grant: Request for review form](#)

Area office staff will then arrange to meet with you – or phone you if you prefer – to formally review your appeal in more detail. By law we must do this no later than 60 days from the date we receive your request for review.

This conversation will give you the opportunity to explain to a senior member of staff why you think our decision is incorrect, provide additional evidence, ask any related questions and seek relevant clarification.

Our area office member of staff will explain why the initial decision was taken, the relevant Scottish and European Commission legislation and, if relevant, why we applied a penalty.

The area office must then send you a written report of the review meeting within 60 days. The report will either confirm, amend or alter our original decision, or revoke it entirely and substitute a new decision.

You can download the request form below and copies are also available from our area offices.

Further action

If the review upholds the original decision and you wish to continue with your case, you need to submit a formal appeal directly to the Scottish Land Court.

The court will then make its own arrangements to deal with it.

Your appeal to the court needs to be made within 60 days of the day that you received the written report of the review meeting.

Find out more information on the Scottish Land Court.

[Scottish Land Court](#)

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27 Complaints

Date published: 14 December, 2018

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

To see recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of this page](#).

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with our standard of service, procedures, or processes that you feel requires a response or explanation from us. You or your representative can complain in person by phone, by email or in writing.

All complaints will be treated seriously by us and you will receive a full response.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

- stage one – frontline resolution
- stage two – investigation

Stage one – frontline resolution

Frontline resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Under this part of the procedure you should direct your complaint to the officer in charge of the staff you have been dealing with.

This person is likely to be located in your area office or in our office in Edinburgh. They may be able to answer your concerns to your satisfaction. We aim to address your stage one complaint in five working days.

[Contact us](#)

If you are dissatisfied with our response you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage two.

Stage two – investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation before we can resolve the issue.

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days. For stage two complaints we will appoint an independent investigating officer who has an in-depth knowledge of the issue you are complaining about and you will receive a report at the end of the investigation.

We aim to issue this report as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days.

You can obtain further information about our complaint handling procedure by visiting the Scottish Government website or by [emailing us](#).

[Scottish Government complaints procedure](#)

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with the decision reached in the Stage Two report, you or your representative have the right to ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to investigate your case.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court for example the Scottish Land Court

The SPSO may, however, consider that in certain cases there are 'special circumstances' that mean a complaint is considered even though it has breached the time limit. Further guidance on 'special circumstances' that may be taken into account can be found on the SPSO website.

You can contact the SPSO in the following ways:

- by post – Freepost SPSO (this is all you need to write on the envelope, and you don't need a stamp)
- by phone – Freephone 0800 377 7330 or 0131 225 5300 (chargeable call)
- by fax –0800 377 7331

[Scottish Public Services Ombudsman website](#)

[Scottish Forestry and Scottish Natural Heritage complaints](#)

If your complaint relates to Scottish Forestry or Scottish Natural Heritage, you can contact them directly through their own complaints procedures.

[Scottish Forestry complaints procedure](#)

[Scottish Natural Heritage complaints](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change	New text
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman	Addition of text on 'special circumstances' SPSP may consider	The SPSO may, however, consider that in certain cases there are 'special circumstances' that mean a complaint is considered even though it has breached the time limit. Further guidance on 'special circumstances' that may be taken into account can be found on the SPSO website.

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