

Endorsements

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

Introduction

In the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, many management options and some capital items are spatially targeted. This means they are only available in parts of the country where they will deliver the greatest benefit. You can find the target area maps in the webpages for each spatially targeted management option or capital item.

You can find out which options are available on the holdings that form part of your farm business by using our targeting tool. Please note that updates to spatial targeting maps may change the options that you're eligible to apply for in this round compared with previous application rounds.

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 in Table 1 (below) and you must obtain an endorsement from NatureScot **before** submitting your AECS application, as explained below.

If you include ineligible items in your application it may be rejected. You should read the guidance for each [option](#) or [capital item](#) that you wish to apply for. You should also read the [How to Apply](#) guidance.

Endorsements for protected areas (designated sites)

Designated sites are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European sites. European sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); they were previously known as Natura sites.

You can apply for options or capital items that are not targeted on your holding if you have obtained an endorsement from NatureScot that they will benefit the notified features of an SSSI or European site. This can occasionally include works outwith the designated site boundary which will directly benefit the notified features. (Note: endorsements cannot be granted for the Hen Harrier Grassland Management option outwith Orkney.)

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

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

Please also refer to the [Designations guidance](#).

Endorsements outwith protected areas

You can also seek an endorsement unconnected with a protected area if you meet the relevant criteria in Table 1 below.

How to request an endorsement

If you wish to seek an endorsement then you must submit a request to NatureScot using the form below. You should submit the form at least a month before the AECS application window closes, to ensure NatureScot has enough time to respond to you.

If you are permitted an endorsement, you must submit this as a supporting document alongside your AECS application.



[Request to NatureScot for endorsement of a management option or capital item \(MS Word, Size: 236.2 kB\)](#)

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Check Table 1 below to see whether you meet the requirements to seek an endorsement.

In the [endorsement request form \(MS Word, Size: 47.9 kB\)](#), you are asked to explain briefly how each option or capital item meets the criteria for endorsement. NatureScot will clarify whether you need to provide any further evidence.

Please note: If you have already received a NatureScot (SNH) endorsement under a previous AECS contract, for the same option(s) **on the same land**, please submit this with your 2024 application. In such cases, you will not need to seek a new endorsement.

If you require any further advice about endorsements please [contact](#) NatureScot.

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.	NatureScot
Unharvested Conservation Headlands for Wildlife	Presence of corn buntings according to existing records.	NatureScot
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 must provide 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>or</p> <p>If records do not exist, 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. The surveys must take place before seeking an endorsement.</p> <p>or</p> <p>You must provide evidence that you are part of an established wader project with confirmation from the wader project officer that the fields entered for management are used for nesting and feeding.</p> <p>For either of the above, you must supply a completed vulnerable priority species recording form setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which waders you are targeting - on which LPIDs - the evidence of the target wader species recorded on each LPID. 	NatureScot
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	NatureScot

	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 NatureScot.	
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. Robust justification will be required if you want to adopt associated options such as Stock Disposal, Away Wintering Sheep, Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle.	NatureScot
Tall-herb Vegetation Management	Presence of tall herb vegetation which would benefit from management under this option.	NatureScot
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 the first land manager in your area to have the invasive plant species on your land.	NatureScot
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.	NatureScot
Any management option or capital item to benefit a designated site (SSSI or European site)	The choice and location of option(s) and/or capital item(s) will benefit the feature(s) of the designated site and the land meets the option eligibility requirements.	NatureScot
Any management option or capital item to benefit freshwater pearl mussels	The choice and location of options and/or capital items will benefit freshwater pearl mussels outwith a designated site.	NatureScot
Wildcat Friendly Predator control	The Saving Wildcats project will release wildcats bred in captivity within the Cairngorms Connect area and it's likely that some of the released wildcats will move into surrounding areas. If you are within or near the Cairngorms Connect area contact the NatureScot mammals advisor to discuss whether you can apply for an endorsement	NatureScot

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. You should submit the form at least a month before the AECS application window closes, to ensure NatureScot has enough time to respond to you. If you are permitted an endorsement, you must submit this as a supporting document alongside your AECS application.



[Request to NatureScot for endorsement of a management option or capital item \(MS Word, Size: 236.2 kB\)](#)

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Table 2

Management option	Criteria for endorsement	Endorsing organisation
Species rich grassland Habitat Mosaic	<p>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 NatureScot.</p> <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 (NVC) survey demonstrating the site contains the target habitats <p>This evidence must accompany your Endorsement request form.</p>	NatureScot

Recent changes

Section	Change
Seeking endorsement for options or capital items outwith their target area.	<p>Added sentence explaining where you can find target area maps for spatially targeted options and capital items.</p> <p>Revised wording and additional text covering endorsement for options or capital items outwith their target area and when to submit the endorsement request form to NatureScot.</p> <p>Edits to Table 1</p>
Seeking endorsement for Species-rich Grassland Management or Habitat Mosaic Management options in hill or upland rough grazing land	<p>Added text covering when to submit the endorsement request form to NatureScot and if endorsed submit it as a supporting document alongside the AECS applications.</p> <p>Edits to Table 2</p>

Previous versions

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