Funding, Claims and Payments

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Funding for management options

Management options are ongoing activities that are carried out throughout the length of your contract. They are funded at standard payment rates, in arrears, for each year of your contract. The payment rates are shown in the individual option pages which you can find through the Management Options guidance . Standard payments are not eligible for topping up or match funding from other funding schemes (please see also the Double Funding guidance).

Funding for capital items

Capital items are one-off activities that can be claimed for and paid when they have been satisfactorily completed. Virtually all capital items are funded on a standard payment rate basis. The payment rates are shown in the individual capital item pages which you can find through the Capital items guidance . Standard payments are not eligible for topping up or match funding from other funding schemes (please see also the Double Funding guidance).

In exceptional circumstances, you can apply for actual costs for capital items, as explained in the Actual Costs section below.

Any capital expenditure incurred before your contract is in place is ineligible.

Funding for Farm Environment Asessments (FEA) and Management Plans

You may be able to claim funding for producing a Farm Environment Assessments and also for Moorland Management Plans and Lowland Bog Management Plans.

Payment is not dependent on the success of your AECS application. However, we will only reimburse you where your Farm Environment Assessment, Moorland Management plan and Lowland Bog plan is fit for purpose.

For Farm Environment Assessment claims, please note:

- if you have submitted an AECS agri-environment application for the first time, you can apply for an FEA payment
- if your only previous AECS agri-environment application was in the 2021 round, you can apply for an FEA payment. This is because a full FEA was not required in the 2021 round and FEA payments were not available
- if you have previously submitted an AECS agri-environment application in any year *except* 2021:
    - if your new application is on the same holding, and the holding is unchanged since the previous application, you cannot apply for an FEA payment
    - if your new application is on the same holding, but the holding now has additional land, you can claim an FEA payment for the additional hectarage only
    - if your new application is on a different holding, under the same BRN, you can claim an FEA payment

Payment is **not** available if you have had an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) produced for your farm funded through the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) as this would constitute double funding.

For Moorland and Lowland Bog Management Plans claims, please note:

You cannot claim a payment for plan(s) for which you received a free site assessment report from a source such as NatureScot, and if the report was sufficiently detailed that you or your agent did not need to carry out a site assessment when preparing the Management Plan. In this situation, claiming the Moorland or Lowland Bog Management Plan payment would constitute double funding.

The payment rates are as follows:

Type of Plan	Area (ha) covered by the Plan	Rate (£) per Plan
Farm Environment Assessment	Less than 50ha	200
	50ha up to 200ha	400
	Great than 200ha	600
Moorland Management Plan	Less than 50ha	100
	50ha up to 100ha	200
	Greater than 100ha and up to 200ha	400
	Greater than 200ha	600
Lowland Bog Plan	10ha or greater	300

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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 contract holder. So it is in your interests to make sure that any claim submitted is correct.

If, once you receive authority to start work, you find that you are unable to keep to the schedule of work detailed in your contract or the associated management plans you must submit a variation request to your case officer and await the decision before making your claim.

The types of claims available are:

- claims for Management Options
- claims for Capital Items
- claims for Farm Environment Assessments and Management Plans

Further details on each are provided below.

Management options claims (for existing scheme participants)

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 (SAF) using the Permanent Land Data Sheets (IACS3). You must do this for each year of your contract.

The primary route to complete and submit your SAF is via our online application system. To do this, you must be registered with Rural Payments and Services . Your local RPID office can offer assistance in getting online, applying online and can help answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Further information is provided in the Single Application Form guidance .

The deadline for the receipt of a Single Application Form will normally be 15 May annually; however this date may change if 15 May falls on a weekend. Any change in SAF submission date is published on the SAF pages of rural payments and services website in advance of the SAF submission window opening.

We will still accept your form up to 25 calendar days after the SAF closing date but will reduce your payments for all schemes covered by the Single Application Form, unless force majeure /exceptional circumstances prevented you from submitting your SAF. For AECS this will be by one per cent for each working day your form is late during the 25 calendar day period. If we receive your SAF form more than 25 calendar days after the SAF deadline no payments will be made.

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.

As the contract holder, 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.

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Capital items claims (for existing scheme participants)

Capital items can be funded 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.

You cannot split up a claim for a single item. For example, if you have a 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 contract is in place will not be eligible for payment.

All capital claims will be paid in full.

You do not need to submit invoices with your claims for standard cost items

To claim for actual cost items, you must submit detailed documentation as explained in the section below on '**Claims for actual costs'**.

Claims for capital items must be submitted by 28 February of the calendar year following the year stipulated in your contract. When 28 February is a Saturday or Sunday, the date falls to the next working day.

So, for example, if you have a claim year of 2028 in your contract, your claim must be submitted during 1 January 2028 to 28 February 2029. Additionally, all the capital works claimed must be completed by 31 December 2028.

If you are unable to undertake the work in the year designated in your contract then you must write to us requesting a Variation . The financial amounts in your contract for one year cannot normally 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 RPID 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.

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

Farm Environment Assessment and Management Plans claims

You must use the PF15 specialist plan claim form to claim payment for a Farm Environment Assessment or for a Moorland or Lowland Bog management plan. Claims must be submitted to your local RPID office by 28 February of the year after you submitted your AECS application. When 28 February is a Saturday or Sunday, the date falls to the next working day.

Receiving payments for management options and capital items

Payments will be made as follows:

- 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 2026, your management payment will be paid in the spring of 2027 once all the inspections for annual management options 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 completed in full and on time and is 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 in the Inspections guidance .

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. Alternatively, you can do this online by logging into your account.

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Receiving Payments for Farm Environment Assessments and Management Plans

Payments for Farm Environment Assessments, Moorland Management Plans and Lowland Bog Management Plans will be made after we have received your PF15 Claim Form and assessed the eligibility of your claim.

This is subject to your claim form being received by the 28 February deadline referred to at the Farm Environment Assessments and Management Plans claims section above.

Actual costs for capital items

Eligibility for actual costs

There are three situations where you can apply for actual costs instead for standard payment rates for capital items:

1. For Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)

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

3. Capital items where there are no standard payment rates available

For actual cost capital items the guidance on quotes below also must be followed.

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites

The Scottish Government is committed to bringing designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European 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 locations where lack of local contractors results in travel and subsistence costs for mainland contractors; or situations requiring longer time to access the work site, or difficult to deliver materials
- awkward, rough or fragile terrain which may require specialist contractors or specialist methods (such as use of matting) or working at a slower rate
    - 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 actual capital costs, where all of the following conditions apply:

- the capital works will be on or adjacent to a designated site and directly aimed at bringing the special features of the site into favourable condition or maintaining favourable condition. Your case officer will confirm this with relevant staff in NatureScot
- you provide adequate justification as to why the standard payments rates are not sufficient. For larger projects, where there are different distinguishable elements, you may have to accept standard costs for those elements for which you cannot justify actual costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes below
- 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
- the item must be in the list below

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 (Formerly 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

*Chemical control of Bracken is no longer funded through AECS

Please note that we will usually only fund standard costs for fencing. Actual costs will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

You should discuss any such proposals with NatureScot 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.

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

In exceptional circumstances, we will consider supporting actual capital costs where the method of work required to avoid damaging a Scheduled Monument site is complex and involves higher costs. All of the following conditions must be met:

- the capital works will support action on, or adjacent to, Scheduled Monuments on designated sites and aim to have a long-term positive benefit on the environment and the condition / management of the scheduled monuments and to also have a long term wider environmental benefit
- you provide 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 accept standard costs for those elements for which you cannot justify actual costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes below
- 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
- the item must be in the list below

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 (Formerly 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

*Chemical control of Bracken is no longer funded through AECS

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.

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)

You must provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes below.

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Quotes for actual costs

You must submit written competitive quotations for the actual cost items included in your application to demonstrate that the costs are reasonable.

If the cost is £10,000 or less at least two valid written quotations are required. If the cost is more than £10,000, you must submit at least three valid written quotations.

Only in exceptional circumstances is one quotation acceptable, as explained under '**Exceptions - acceptance of one quote'** below.

You must submit a Quotations table using the template provided below.

Quotations table - blank template (MS Word, Size: 50.7 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS-2023-quotations-table---blank-template.docx

Quotations table - example table (PDF, Size: 156.6 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS-2023-quotations-table-example.pdf

You must ask all suppliers to quote on a clear specification with works/requirements accurately described, the quotes must refer to this specification and you must provide a copy of the specification with your application.

There must be no conflict of interest between the various suppliers providing the quotes, or between the applicants or their agent and the suppliers. A conflict of interest is a situation where a third party, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably consider that such an interest could unfairly influence actions or decisions. For example, an agent must not tender a quote for works and this also applies to any individual or contractor who has a close connection with the business.

For items/services other than water troughs, Fair Work First (FWF) will apply to any goods or services purchased or obtained in relation to your AECS contract if your application is successful. You must ensure that any suppliers and/or contractors involved in servicing the requirements of the contract comply with FWF.

The case officer will be looking for the following:

- a completed quotations table summarising the quotes information - see example above
- quotes are addressed to the applicant
- quotes are written / printed, on business headed notepaper and clearly originated from a reputable supplier who can deliver the items or work

- quotes are clear and meet all the tender specifications as they must be comparable on a like-for-like basis
- no missing elements - any costs not included in the total estimated costs on your application will not be eligible for funding
- no ineligible elements
- cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
- where there is an equivalent standard cost capital item your specification must use the same unit of measurement as the standard cost item
- for larger projects, the quote must include a schedule which breaks down costs for each of the main stages or capital elements of the work (these can be claimed on completion of each stage of work as these appear in the schedule of works)
- suppliers must confirm for how long the quote is valid
- whether the price includes appropriate VAT rate. Details of any VAT to be paid must be shown against the relevant items. If you are VAT registered you must 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
- for capital items intended to benefit the environment and the long term management of scheduled monuments on designated sites (SSSI or European sites - see Funding under this scheme), there must be a justification for using actual capital costs and the quotes must be sufficiently detailed to show the methodology and specialist requirements

When assessing your application, the case officer will consider whether the proposed costs are reasonable, taking into account other cost information for that activity.

If the quotes supplied are insufficient in any way, your case officer will advise you of this. If you do not remedy any deficiencies promptly and supply the case officer with the required documentation the relevant actual costs may be amended to standard costs, or be removed from the application, which may in exceptional circumstances risk rejection of the whole application.

If your application is successful, funding will be based on the lowest valid quote received (subject to confirmation that the costs are considered to be reasonable). You can choose to proceed with a more expensive company if you wish, but the amount we pay will not exceed maximum amount / total cost per ‘item’ shown on the schedule of works in your contract.

Exceptions – acceptance of one quote

Subject to your case officer’s approval, a single 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, for works in a very 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.

Claims for actual costs

When claiming, you must provide the following details - either as hard copy or electronically as scanned documents or photographs.

- 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

In addition, when you submit an original invoice either as hard copy or electronically as scanned documents or photographs you must also back it up with other evidence of payment, such as:

- 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

The evidence of payment for actual cost items can be submitted in hard copy or electronically as scanned documents or photographs. You must ensure that all the required information is provided whatever submission method is used, otherwise your claim may be rejected.

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Appeals

If you are unhappy with any decisions regarding payments, you can find information about appeals on our Appeals guidance .

Recent changes

Section	Change
Whole page	Funding and Quotes sections added and other sections updated.

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