

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 12 November, 2025

Date superseded: 12 December, 2025



Introduction

On this page you will find information about the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS). It explains the aims of the scheme and how it is managed and provides guidance on how to participate in the scheme.

AECS promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's magnificent natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and help to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The scheme is being delivered jointly by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) of the Scottish Government and NatureScot.

For further information please click on the grey boxes below.

Overview

Please click on the grey boxes to the left to find out more about how to take part in AECS.

Application dates for 2025 AECS round:

- Agri-Environment applications: 3 February - 12 June
- Organics applications: 3 February - 31 July
- Irrigation Lagoons applications: 17 February - 12 June
- Agri-environment combined with Organics and/or Irrigation Lagoons in the same application: 3 February - 12 June

The 2026 AECS round will open early in 2026. The opening and closing dates will be published in due course.

Updates

Updates to the AECS guidance webpages

The webpages were updated for the 2025 round. At the end of each page there is a summary of the recent changes.

[This table has a summary of the main updates for the 2025 round. \(PDF, Size: 150.3 kB\)](#)

You can find previous versions of each webpage in the [archive](#) .

Application results for the 2024 round

View the [results of the 2024 round \(PDF, Size: 254.5 kB\)](#) .

Who can apply

The scheme is open to farmers, groups of farmers, crofters and other land managers with land in Scotland.

To apply, you must be [registered with us](#) and have a Business Reference Number (BRN).

You must meet the scheme [Eligibility and Occupancy of Land](#) requirements.

You will also need to meet [Fair Work First](#) requirements.

What management can be funded

We fund two types of activity - management options and capital items.

The [Management Options page](#) has guidance on the management activities that we support. It also has links to each individual management option. Management options normally run for five years.

The [Capital Items page](#) has guidance about capital items. It also lists all the capital items and has links to each individual item.

Please read the pages for each option or capital item you wish to apply for, to check if you can meet all the requirements. Most options and items also have a Supporting Guidance page. This can help you decide if the options or items are suitable.

Some options are only available in certain parts of Scotland. You can check which options are available on your land by entering your Holding Code(s) in the [Targeting tool \(MS Excel, Size: 12.2 MB\)](#) . You cannot apply for an option or capital item outwith its target area unless you have obtained an [Endorsement](#) from NatureScot.

Please note that you can no longer apply for Slurry Stores or Improving Public Access (IPA).

How to apply

The [How to Apply](#) page provides a step-by-step guide to the application process.

AECS applications are submitted using the online Rural Payments and Services (RP&S) system. The [Online Application guidance \(PDF, Size: 4.1 MB\)](#) provides instructions and screenshots.

You will also have to prepare some documents offline and submit these with your online application. Please see [Checklist of Documents \(MS Excel, Size: 38.9 kB\)](#) required.

Further guidance for applicants:

[Farm Environment Assessment \(FEA\) guidance](#) :* nearly all applications require an FEA covering the entire holding.

[Diffuse Pollution Assessments](#) :* most applications require this.

[Mapping](#) : how to produce the maps for your application.

[Designations](#) : guidance for nature sites and historic sites

[Endorsements](#):* guidance on seeking endorsements from NatureScot

[Double Funding and Option Incompatibility](#)

[Licences, Consents and Protected Species](#)

[Advice on Calculating Stocking Densities](#)

* Note: these pages are not relevant if you are only applying for Organics.

How your application is assessed

To understand how we assess applications, please see the [Application Assessment](#) guidance.

We have also published the [Scoring Criteria](#) we use to assess applications in this competitive scheme.

The following types of activity each have their own separate scoring criteria:

Agri-environment

Organics

Irrigation Lagoons

Contracts

The links below provide information on receiving an AECS contract offer, how to accept a contract and how to change or end a contract.

[Contracts Information](#) : how contract offers are made and the process for accepting a contract.

[Contract Terms and Conditions \(PDF, Size: 271.0 kB\)](#)

[How to Request a Variation to a Contract](#)

[Contracts Successions](#) : how to pass on a contract to a new owner or occupier.

[Withdrawing from the Scheme](#) : what to do if you need to leave your contract.

[Management Diaries and Advice on Calculating Stocking Densities](#) : information on the diaries that you must complete for each year of your contract. This only applies to agri-environment contracts.

How to claim payments

The [Funding, Claims and Payments guidance](#) covers the following:

- Management option payments
- Capital item payments (including actual costs for capital items and Quotes for actual costs)
- Farm Environment Assessments (FEA) payments
- Moorland and Lowland Bog Management Plans payments

Management option payment claims are done through your Single Application Form (SAF) each year and payments are made the following year.

Capital item payments are made upon receipt of a valid claim and following any necessary inspection or administrative checks. Your claim must include any relevant supporting documentation.

You will receive payments in sterling by BACS into your nominated bank account.

Inspections, breaches and penalties

We may carry out inspections as part of AECS contracts.

In the instance of breaches, penalties may apply.

[Inspections guidance](#)

[Breaches and Penalties guidance](#)

Reviews, appeals and complaints

[How to request a review](#) of our decision about whether to fund your application.

[How to appeal a decision](#) about a payment under your AECS contract.

[What to do if you have a complaint](#) .

How to contact us

If you have any questions about this scheme, please get in touch.

[Contact Us \(Rural Payments and Inspections Division\)](#)

[Contact details for NatureScot](#)

You can also book an appointment at your local RPID office if you need any help to use this guidance, or with the online application system.

Reports on scheme outcomes

Evaluation and monitoring of AECS

AECS formed part of the [ex-post evaluation of the Scottish Rural development Programme 2014-2020](#) published in December 2024. [Annex A 1](#) provides a summary report on AECS.

Reports on the biodiversity outcomes of AECS:

- in 2019-20 NatureScot commissioned the James Hutton Institute to examine the biodiversity benefits and impacts of the scheme through a selection of case studies. [View the case study report](#)
- geographic uptake: in 2019-20 NatureScot produced a series of heat maps showing the geographic uptake of AECS options: [AECS heat maps report](#)
- you can also view a [Summary of the results](#) of these two projects

Improving Public Access (IPA): AECS provided funding in 2015 to 2022 for footpaths and associated works to improve access to the countryside, involving over 250km of pathwork. You can find more details in the [IPA scheme evaluation report](#).

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