

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 23 February, 2022

Date superseded: 20 January, 2023

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

The version of this page applicable to the AECS 2021 restricted round can be found in the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme full guidance archive.

The [latest AECS news release can be found on gov.scot](#)



The Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) 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 also helps to improve public access and preserve historic sites.

Full scheme guidance

AECS 2022

[AECS has been extended and will have an annual application round until 2024.](#)

The 2022 round opened on Monday 24 January and will close on Friday 29 April 2022, with a few exceptions (see below).

Before you apply for this scheme, please read the full scheme guidance, and the rules and supporting information for individual options and capital items which must be followed over the course of your contract.

[Full scheme guidance.](#)

Rules and supporting information

[Management options](#)

[Capital items](#)

Also, each management option and capital item page has a link to supporting information which provides recommendations and best practice in relation to the why, where, how and what for each option and capital item. Your application could gain additional points if you follow these.

A list of AECS web pages that have been updated for the 2022 application round can be found below

[List of web page updates for AECS 2022 \(MS Word, Size: 33.0 kB\)](#)

The closing date is extended to Tuesday 31 May 2022 for collaborative applications that meet the following requirements:

- It must be a completely **new** collaborative project and not simply a continuation of one which was previously funded through AECS;
- The project must include five or more 2022-round applications from RPID registered businesses

This is in recognition of the additional time involved to facilitate collaborative action with many businesses.

Applications for Slurry Storage can be made during the main AECS window (Monday 24 January 2022 to Friday 29 April 2022); however, the deadline for stand-alone slurry store applications is Friday 24 June 2022.

For applications for Improving Public Access (IPA), there is a separate opening period, Monday 28 February 2022 to Friday 29 April 2022 inclusive.

If you receive a 2021 round contract for part of your holding, you will not be disadvantaged if you then apply in 2022 for other parts of the holding.

The 2021 contract will be taken into account when assessing your 2022 application. The 2022 application round will be a full round.

Further important information about the 2022 round is provided below:

1. Most agri-environment applications will require a full Farm Environment Assessment (FEA) covering the entire holding, as in the 2019 round, rather than the more restricted FEA required in 2021.
2. Most agri-environment applications require one or more management plans (e.g. a moorland management plan or a grazing plan). Due to concerns about plans lacking adequate information, new plan templates are provided for the 2022 round. It is mandatory to use these and to provide all the information specified. In particular, you must provide up-to-date habitat assessments and grazing regime details.
3. If applying for the Wader options, a wader management plan must be completed. The wader plan template is a simplified version of the one used in 2021.
4. If you intend to apply for management to benefit a designated site (SSSI or European site) you are strongly advised to contact [NatureScot](#) before preparing your application. Also, you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot if you are considering applying for deer management. You should make contact as early as possible and at least a month before the closing date to allow time for a response. The same applies if you require a NatureScot endorsement to allow you to apply for an option outwith its target area.

IPA 2022

The IPA guidance for applicants has been refreshed for the 2022 round which opens on 28th February 2022 and closes 29th April 2022.

NatureScot is running a webinar to demystify IPA and the application requirements on 3rd March.

There have been minor changes made to IPA 2022 to improve the score criteria, further clarify the capital item requirements and also note that the option for semi-bound new paths will not be available.

All applicants must ensure they have included, with their IPA application supporting documents, a statement from the planning authority regarding the need, or otherwise for planning permission for their proposals, we recommend early dialogue.

IPA scheme information can be found on the [Improving Public Access page](#) . Any queries about IPA should be sent to IPA@nature.scot

AECS 2021 round

AECS opened a restricted round for new applications on 25 of January 2021 which closed on 2 July 2021.

A list of the applications results from the 2021 application round, can be found in the table below.

[AECS 2021 - results list \(PDF, Size: 569.8 kB\)](#)

For further AECS updates from previous application rounds , please check our updates page.

How to get help and advice:

If you have any questions about this scheme, please get in touch. Contact details for RPID offices can be found in our [Contact us](#) section or find [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.

Updates

For further AECS updates from previous application windows, please check our [updates page](#) .

Eligibility

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.

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

To maximise environmental outcomes and ensure value for money, support under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is geographically targeted.

This means you will need to check which options are available in your area before applying.

You can check which options and capital items you are eligible to apply for by [entering your Holding Code](#). If you have several holdings, you will need to enter each of these separately.

More information on **eligibility** can be found in the [Eligibility](#) and [Ownership of land](#) sections of the full scheme guidance.

Selection criteria

There are two levels of entry to this scheme. Applications falling into each category will be assessed as follows.

- Level 1 - this is for lower value applications up to an agreed monetary value for the round. This agreed value is dependent on the amount and value of the applications received. 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 by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division or NatureScot (formally Scottish Natural Heritage) for approval or rejection.
- Level 2 - this is for higher value applications above an agreed monetary value for the round. This agreed value is dependent on the amount and value of the applications received. Applications for this level will undergo an initial assessment as per level one. After assessment the case will be considered by an expert panel constituted on a national basis for approval or rejection.

Applications will be scored against selection criteria.

More information on **selection criteria** can be found in the [How to apply](#), [Application assessment](#) and [Scoring criteria](#) sections of the full scheme guidance.

Applications

To apply to this scheme, you will first need to register with and then log in to Rural Payments and Services.

[Register](#)

To ensure an effective use of scheme funds, you will normally be limited to a single application per year. However, an exception will apply for the management of designated sites, as well as for certain situations where land managers have widely separated areas of land.

More information on **applications** can be found in the following sections of the full scheme guidance:

[How to apply](#)

[What you need to apply](#)

[Designations](#)

[Mapping](#)

[Farm Environment Assessment](#)

[Diffuse pollution risk assessment](#)

[Endorsements](#)

[Funding under this scheme](#)

[Double funding and option incompatibility](#)

Claims

If your application to the scheme is successful, you will be issued with a contract of up to five years setting out the approved work you can claim funding for.

You can submit your claim for the funding set out in the contract on completion of the work. Management options on your contract must be declared on your Single Application Form by the agreed date, on an annual basis, for the duration of your contract.

Capital items are claimed separately on the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme capital claim form and can only be claimed once you have completed the work.

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

More information on **claims** can be found in the [Claims and payments](#) section of the full scheme guidance.

Payments

Management option payments

Payments for management options will be paid annually in the year following submission of your Single Application Form.

For example, if you submit a claim in 2022 payment will be made in 2023.

Capital item payments

Payments for capital items will be made upon receipt of a valid claim with any relevant supporting documentation and following any inspection or administrative checks that may be required.

You will receive payment by BACS into your nominated bank account. All payments will be made in sterling.

More information on **payments** can be found in the [Claims and payments](#) section of the full scheme guidance.

Inspections

If your application to join the scheme is successful, you will be subject to our inspections programme.

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.

More information on **inspections** can be found in the [Inspections](#) section of this site.

Specific information on **inspections** for [management options and capital items](#) is included on each option or item page.

Breaches and penalties

If we discover that you have not followed the contract terms and conditions, we will call this a breach.

A breach can be identified in a number of different ways for example:

- through the automatic checking we carry out against your applications, claims, your land and allowances
- through an inspection
- following a check of the supporting documentation relating to a claim

More information on breaches and penalties relating to this scheme can be found in the full scheme guidance.

[Breaches and penalties](#)

Further information on why we need to penalise breaches can be found below.

[Disallowance and penalties](#)

Reviews, appeals and complaints

If you are not content with the approval decision relating to your application, you can request that we review the decision.

If you receive a decision to refuse, recover or reduce your payment, you may appeal this decision under the Rural Payments Appeal procedures.

If you are unhappy with our service as a whole, we have a dedicated complaints procedure to help you resolve this.

More information on **reviews**, **appeals** and **complaints** can be found in the following sections:

[Reviews](#)

[Appeals](#)

[Complaints](#)

Contact

If you have any questions about this scheme, please get in touch. Contact details can be found in our Contact us section.

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

[Contact \(NatureScot\)](#)

Scheme delivery

This scheme is delivered through:



Recent Changes

Section	Change
Whole page	Updated information on AECS 2022 round and results of 2021 application round.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)