How to apply

This is an old version of the page

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

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Introduction

The 2017 Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application round opens on 30 January, 2017 and closes on 31 March, 2017. Supporting documentation must be submitted by the 31 March, 2017 application deadline.

For applications for Improving Public Access, there is a separate opening period (20 March, 2017 to 31 May, 2017 inclusive), and a separate assessment process using different criteria

How to apply for Improving Public Access

Scoring criteria for Improving Public Access

Applications for the Improving Public Access item must be made separately from any other application for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, and cannot be made before 20 March, 2017.

Applications for Slurry Storage can be made during the main AECS window (30 January, 2017 to 31 March, 2017), however, the deadline for stand alone slurry store applications is 30 June, 2017.

Depending on uptake a second application period for slurry storage may be opened later in 2017.

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)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Slurry-storage-scoring-criteria---score-sheet----30-May-2017.xlsx 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 (MS Excel, Size: 192.8 kB)

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)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/ aecs_application_desk_instructions_customers_rm_v5_280116_2.pdf Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS): Online application guidance for customers
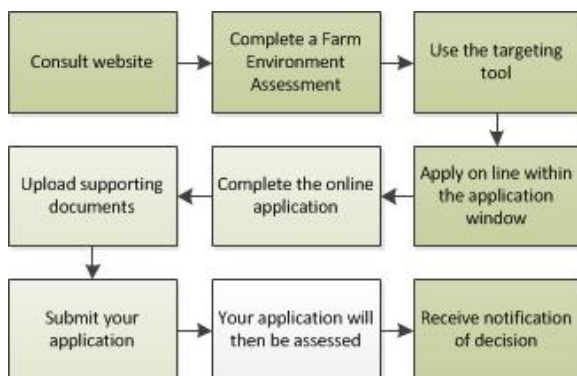
1. Consult website

You should first check the relevant sections of this website to get a better understanding of the rules of the scheme, and to check that you will be eligible to apply. See common application mistakes .

2. Complete a Farm Environment Assessment

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

- improving public access
- 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 ,if applicable.

3. 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

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 arising out of approvals under the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund and those applications solely for funding access, organic aid and slurry storage (from 2016 onwards).

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

Along with the information you complete online you will also need to supply additional documents.

Checklist of requirements for Agri-Environment Climate Scheme applications (MS Word, Size: 58.4 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS-Updates---Checklist-of-requirements----further-update---26-January-2017-2-.doc Updated January 2017

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 office.

Supporting documents must be submitted by the application deadline 31st March, 2017.

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 2016 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 2016 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

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.

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
Introduction	Slurry storage scoring criteria and catchment tool added

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

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