Scoring criteria

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Updates to last version

- maps added for vulnerable priority species
- revision to the scoring information for vulnerable priority species

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1. Agri-Environment Climate Scheme scoring criteria

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use to assess all Agri-Environment Climate Scheme applications other than those for improving public access.

The score sheet template is available separately for download (see below).

PDF

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet (PDF, Size: 166.6 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS---Score-sheet---260315.pdf Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet

Where applications are purely for organic options, we will assess them in the first instance using the 'scale of delivery' and 'national priorities' criteria for comparison against other stand-alone organic applications.

1.1 Scale of delivery

In-bye and moorland management

The more land on your holding that you propose to manage under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme in comparison to the total area of your holding, the more points you will be allocated.

We will separately assess the proportion of in-bye and the proportion of moorland being managed in your application in relation to the total areas of in-bye and moorland on your holding.

We will allocate points on a sliding scale depending on the percentage managed. We will only carry forward the highest score between either in-bye or moorland.

Diffuse pollution risks

Where diffuse pollution risks are identified within the Farm Environment Assessment, the more of these you address through Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management, the more points you will be allocated.

1.2 National priorities

We will allocate extra points for applications which help to deliver at least one of the following national priorities:

National priorities
Protected nature sites: enhancing the condition of designated features of SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites
Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species
Climate change: enhancing carbon stores through peatland restoration
Water environment: contributing to the 'good status' of water bodies under the Water Framework Directive
Organic farming: maintaining or increasing the area of organically managed farmland in Scotland

Protected nature sites: Enhancing the condition of designated features of SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites

You will be allocated points if you meet all of the following requirements:

- your application includes land on or adjacent to a designated site
- the proposed management is likely to benefit the features of the designated site:
  - a 'feature' is a habitat, earth science interest or species population which has been identified as of particular importance in the citation for the designated site
  - 'benefit' means maintaining the features in favourable condition, or helping the features to recover if their condition is unfavourable, for those parts of the features that are under your control
- the application includes the management of your land, which is on or adjacent to a designated site, which is required to benefit the features present on the designated site, and which is within your control

Information on sites and features can be found using Sitelink. You are strongly advised to contact Scottish Natural Heritage to discuss your designated site proposals, before preparing an application.

Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species

You will be allocated points if your application will directly benefit the population of at least one of the following vulnerable priority species (for farmland waders, your application must benefit at least two species in the table below).

Vulnerable priority species
Farmland waders – the application must directly benefit at least two of the following wader species. The species selected must include curlew and / or lapwing. • curlew • lapwing • oystercatcher • redshank • snipe
Other species with significant Scottish population declines which depend on appropriate management.

- corncrake
- corn bunting
- chough
- twite (on in-bye only)
- black grouse
- hen harrier
- marsh fritillary
- great yellow bumblebee
- great crested newt
- freshwater pearl mussel

In order to score points under this criterion, you must

- confirm that your holding is within the mapped range for the species, submitting information using the vulnerable priority species recording form, and
- include management options and / or capital items in your application which will benefit the species, located appropriately within the holding, as indicated in the Supporting guidance for vulnerable priority species

Black grouse (PDF, Size: 1.0 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Black-grouse--A1630542-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Chough (PDF, Size: 786.4 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Chough--A1630547-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Corn bunting (PDF, Size: 791.6 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Corn-bunting--A1630537-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Corncrake (PDF, Size: 885.0 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Corncrake--A1630540-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Curlew (PDF, Size: 1.1 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Curlew--A1630544-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Great crested newt (PDF, Size: 948.8 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Great-crested-newt--A1631934-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Great yellow bumblebee (PDF, Size: 973.2 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Great-yellow-bumblebee--A1630541-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Hen harrier (PDF, Size: 1.2 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Hen-harrier--A1630545-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Lapwing (PDF, Size: 1.1 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Lapwing--A1630546-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Marsh fritillary (PDF, Size: 960.4 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Marsh-fritillary--A1632916-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Oystercatcher (PDF, Size: 1.1 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Oystercatcher--A1630548-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Redshank (PDF, Size: 1.2 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Redshank--A1630543-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Snipe (PDF, Size: 1.1 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Snipe--A1630539-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Twite (PDF, Size: 1.3 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/71605---SRDP---AECS---Vulnerable-Priority-Species-Target-Maps---Twite--A1630538-.pdf Vulnerable priority species target map

Climate change: enhancing carbon stores through peatland restoration

You will be allocated points if you meet both of the following conditions:

- your application includes management to restore peatlands using one of the following capital items:

- Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams
- Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams
- the management will be undertaken within a peatland area

Peatland area map (PDF, Size: 2.4 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Maps-for-website---national-priorities---peatland-map-area.pdf Peatland area map – national priorities

If you are unsure whether your holding is within this area, please contact your local RPID office for advice.

Water environment: contributing to the 'good status' of water bodies under Water Framework Directive

You will be allocated points if your application will contribute to improving water quality in one of Scotland's diffuse pollution priority catchments or focus areas.

Priority catchment map (PDF, Size: 1.4 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Maps-for-website---national-priorities---priority-catchment-map.pdf Priority catchment map – national priorities

Applications should:

- be supported by a Farm Environment Assessment to identify diffuse pollution risks and target options appropriately
- include measures needed to address all diffuse pollution risks on the land holding (or justify why not)

Organic farming: maintaining or increasing the area of organically managed farmland in Scotland

You will be allocated points if at least 25 per cent of your permanently held land will be managed under the 'organic conversion' sub-option, or at least 75 per cent will be managed under the 'organic maintenance' sub-option.

1.3 Habitat linkage

This recognises that managing habitats across a holding where there is linkage between them can provide additional benefits, for example by creating wildlife corridors.

We will assess that linkage across the holding and allocate points accordingly. The greater the linkage across the holding the more points will be allocated.

The habitats may already exist and not be proposed for specific funding under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme but provided an Agri-Environment Climate Scheme option links those habitats together, then a score is justified.

For example, two pockets of woodland 500 metres apart are separated by an arable field, and a hedge is proposed linking the two woodland areas together. Habitat linkage would be applicable in this instance.

While this criterion is about the creation of physical linkage of sites, if you can make a fully justified case for site linkage across a holding where the sites are not physically linked then points may be allocated.

You must demonstrate additional environmental benefit beyond what would otherwise be achieved as individual standalone sites.

1.4 Long-term benefit

This is designed to recognise that some options deliver environmental benefit for a period longer than the duration of the contract.

The score sheet sets out the options we will consider and points will be allocated if criteria are met

1.5 Value for money

This recognises that management of habitats delivered at a lower capital infrastructure cost provides better public value for money than those applications which require higher capital infrastructure costs. In other words, more money is spent on management of habitats than on associated capital items.

We recognise that there are standalone capital options that should not be considered in this calculation as they are delivering environmental outcomes in their own right.

The only capital items to be included in this value for money calculation are:

- Stock Fence
- Deer Fence
- gates of any sort

We will deduct points on a sliding scale depending on the percentage of capital infrastructure costs compared to total application costs.

1.6 Collaborative approach

This recognises that collaboration between applicants can lead to better environmental outcomes, for example by delivering management at a landscape scale.

You must provide full details of the collaboration (i.e. names, locations, options and / or habitats and the proposed additional benefits to the environment resulting from the collaboration).

You should provide supporting evidence which has been agreed with all parties involved, together with a map which shows the locations of the collaborating properties.

Those identified as collaborating partners must be Agri-Environment Climate Scheme participants.

In order to meet the collaboration score the initial collaborators must apply in the same year, however, once they have contracts in place, other land managers may join in later years. Points will be allocated on a sliding scale according to the number of collaborators.

Simply referencing a neighbouring applicant also managing land under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme will not be sufficient to score points under this criterion.

The Environmental Co-operation Action Fund is a separate scheme under the Scottish Rural Development Programme. Any applications submitted to the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme in order to deliver collaborative plans developed under the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund are likely to provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the collaboration criterion.

Collaborative applications to the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme which have not been facilitated through the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund can still be allocated points for collaboration, but robust evidence will be required as indicated above.

1.7 Additional points

This is a section designed to provide flexibility to allocate points for certain activities that improve the environmental outcomes delivered by an application.

Spatial priorities

Applications for certain management options will score additional points if they are within priority areas, where management will deliver an increased benefit.

The following management options and capital items will score additional points within priority areas for water quality, as shown in the map.

- Water Margins in Arable Fields
- Water Margins in Grassland Fields
- Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland
- Management of Floodplains

- Alternative Watering
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Retention Pond
- Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland

Priority areas for water quality map (PDF, Size: 1.6 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Maps-for-website---spatial-priorities---priority-areas-for-water-quality.pdf Priority areas for water quality map

The following management options will score additional points within peatland areas:

- Moorland Management
- Stock Disposal
- Away Wintering Sheep

Peatland area map (PDF, Size: 2.4 MB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Maps-for-website---spatial-priorities---peatland-map-area.pdf Peatland area map – spatial priorities

The predator control management option will score additional points within the range of the declining black grouse population in the south of Scotland.

South of Scotland black grouse map (PDF, Size: 455.6 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Maps-for-website---spatial-priorities---predator-control---south-of-Scotland-black-grouse-range-2.pdf South of Scotland black grouse map

If you're not sure whether your holding is within these areas, please contact your local RPID office for advice.

Scheduled monuments

If management through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme will protect or reduce the risk of deterioration to certain Scheduled Monuments, verified by Historic Scotland, then additional points may be awarded to recognise the outcome being achieved.

Applicants will be informed if a relevant Scheduled Monument is present on their holding on the Targeting web page. Click here to visit the Targeting page, where you will be asked to enter your holding code.

Management options may be specified under this heading which can be used to benefit the Scheduled Monument.

You will score additional points if you propose to benefit the Scheduled Monument by undertaking these management options and / or any relevant capital items, as endorsed by Historic Scotland .

2. Agri-Environment Climate Scheme scoring criteria – Improving Public Access

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use for assessing applications with Improving Public Access options.

The score sheet template is available separately for download (see below).

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet: Improving Public Access (PDF, Size: 139.4 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS---Score-sheets---Public-Access---170315.pdf

2.1 Connectivity

This about the physical linkage of the paths proposals with other paths and with types of locations.

Your access proposal will score points if it meets one or more of the following requirements:

- should be a core path as designated in the relevant core paths plan
- should link directly to a core path
- should create or upgrade path access to a feature of public interest, for example, a viewpoint, loch shore, along a river bank, to a historic or cultural feature or site
- should create path links to other paths in order to form effective and convenient parts of more extensive local path networks, or of a long-distance path

2.2 Access authority response

This is to recognise comments arising from the access authority to which the application map is sent for information, verification and comment.

It will recognise the authority's comments for or against, and indicate if they comment that a project would have particularly significant benefits for their area.

You will score points if depending on the access authorities response.

2.3 Value for money

This recognises that differing value can be obtained from expenditure, whatever the total scale and cost of the project, and to ensure that the most effective outputs-per-unit expenditure are generated:

- proportionate and economic level of specification – this will assess and score the extent to which the proposed scale and specifications of the work is appropriate and good value
- distance leverage – this will measure the ratio between the length of path to be created or upgraded, as compared to the length of paths that then become better available for public use. This may for instance recognise new paths which open up a 'missing link' to make a whole route or path circuit useable, or where generally a relatively short stretch of path-work unlocks the convenient use and quality of a much longer stretch of path
- objectives leverage – this will recognise value for money where the path works will generate leveraged benefits for wider local objectives, such as a local community heritage or tourist trail, or a local wildlife project, or a local recreational initiative
- prospective volumes of use – this will assess the anticipated general volumes of use, to favour projects which are likely to be popular for public use compared to routes which may receive only occasional visits

2.4 Barrier-free provision for shared multi-use of paths

All schemes will aim to provide barrier-free, unobstructed and good-quality paths as far as possible for shared path use by most or all types of users (i.e. walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, wheelchairs, push-chairs and water users as appropriate).

This criterion is designed to recognise that some options may deliver wider benefits than others in these respects of shared multi-use, through:

- removal or avoidance of existing access barriers and obstacles, like steep gradients, boggy ground, stiles / kissing gates / fences, watercourses, steps
- the extent to which improved or full multi-use for types of users is achieved
- enhanced convenience and assistance for users through appropriate provision of informative signage, suitable seating as resting points, convenient gates and latches, etc

2.5 Contextual benefits

This assesses the more indirect advantages of application proposals in enhancing the quality of experience of path users in their surroundings.

This may be through effective selection and design of routes, or where the access project combines with other concurrent initiatives to enhance the path surroundings:

- enhanced availability of landscape views, and / or appreciation of route features such as old walls, hedges, avenues, bridges etc
- opening or enhancing public access within eligible rural areas designated as national scenic areas, designed landscapes, local nature reserves, regional parks, country parks or national parks
- opening or extending public access in association with other Agri-Environment Climate Scheme options or other schemes for enhanced biodiversity, natural interest, environmental management etc within the path corridor

2.6 Additional considerations for Level 2 large-scale applications

Level 2 applications allow for assessment and scoring of benefits from larger and / or multi-partner collaborative schemes in addressing more multiple or strategic objectives:

- active involvement by local organisations in project
- any local consultations that have directly assisted in forming proposals
- additional value added through partner contributions, expertise etc
- prospects for longer-term value, for example, through volunteer involvement, follow-on projects or educational use
- the path is a priority route or link in the National Walking and Cycling Network or other strategic plan, or the path provides improved access to popular visitor destinations, or the path contributes to regional strategies for active travel

Previous versions

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