

# Catchment Management for Water Quality

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**Date published: 6 October, 2015**

**Date superseded: 11 December, 2015**

## Table of Contents

[Aim](#)

[Eligibility](#)

[Expertise required](#)

[Potential Agri-Environment Climate Scheme and Forestry Grant Scheme options](#)

[Priority specific facilitation activities](#)

[Assessment criteria](#)

[Monitoring requirements](#)

[Application requirements](#)

[Appropriate minimum spatial scale](#)

[Further information](#)

[Download guidance](#)

## Aim

The way land is managed affects the quality of the water environment. Diffuse pollution in rural areas can result when rainwater run-off from land picks up soil, fertilisers and pesticides.

Water quality in around 235 water bodies is adversely affected by diffuse pollution. Agriculture is the dominant source of this pollution in most rural catchments, though forestry and septic tanks can also be important sources in some catchments.

To improve water quality it is important to tackle diffuse pollution at the landscape scale, co-ordinating across neighbouring farms within a catchment or sub-catchment.

The aim of the Environmental Co-operative Action Fund is to help deliver landscape scale action by helping to fund the facilitation and management costs of such projects. It is envisaged that this will help to encourage uptake of relevant options in target areas.

## Eligibility

In addition to the generic eligibility requirements, you must also confirm that the land is located within a diffuse pollution priority area and the water bodies in question must be failing to meet water quality standards or contributing to the downgrading of another water body.

You can contact the [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) for information on diffuse pollution priority areas.

## Expertise required

Your application will be scored on the evidence provided on the facilitator's knowledge and experience of co-operative processes and project management.

In addition, it is very important that the proposed facilitation activities are informed by good knowledge of the range of water quality measures likely to be employed. It is desirable (but not essential) that facilitator has:

- knowledge and experience of farming and agricultural systems (relevant to the proposed catchment)
- excellent communication and organisational skills
- knowledge of environmental protection and agricultural diffuse pollution mitigation techniques
- knowledge of the environmental regulatory system, including Controlled Activity Regulations licensing and diffuse pollution general binding rules

## Potential Agri-Environment Climate Scheme and Forestry Grant Scheme options

There are a number of options within the Agri-Environment and Climate Scheme and the Forestry Grant Scheme that can potentially help to improve water quality. The list below contains many of the principal options designed to improve water quality. Others may also be appropriate in certain circumstances.

- [Alternative Watering](#)
- [Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland](#)
- [Hard Standings for Troughs and Gateways](#)
- [Livestock Crossing](#)
- [Livestock Tracks](#)
- [Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#)
- [Pesticide Handling Facilities](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Retention Pond](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland](#)
- [Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting](#)
- [Beetlebanks](#)
- [Grass Strips in Arable Fields](#)
- [Retention of Winter Stubbles for Wildlife and Water Quality](#)
- [Unharvested Conservation Headlands for Wildlife](#)
- [Water Margins in Arable Fields](#)
- [Water Margins in Grassland Fields](#)
- [Creation of Species-rich Grassland](#)
- [Management, Restoration or Creation of Hedgerows](#)

There are also a number of woodland creation options within the Forestry Grant Scheme that have the potential to improve water quality, such as the [Small or Farm Woodland](#) option.

If Agri-Environment Climate Scheme or Forestry Grant Scheme funding is to be sought to deliver work on the ground applicants must ensure that the holdings lie within the target areas for those options.

- [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme](#)
- [Forestry Grant Scheme](#)

## Priority specific facilitation activities

While the scale and nature of each project will dictate the types of facilitation activities that will be appropriate, there will be certain activities that would be expected to feature as part of most types of project. There are other activities that, while potentially supportable via the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund, may not be relevant for every project.

Highlighted here are the facilitation activities that are specific to this priority. Please use the Costs and Activities Table for the generic information.

| Activity group                              | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Verification                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Site visits, surveys and evidence gathering | Once the farms have agreed in principle to taking part, the catchment (area of land involved in the project) will need to be visited to identify and map diffuse pollution risks that should be addressed.<br>The extent of the area surveyed should be clearly mapped and it must be clear | Map of diffuse pollution risks identified – best included within (or appended to) the strategic management plan |

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                 | whether the survey involved steadings as well as the land.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                          |
| Strategic management plan                       | In some cases, detailed technical study may need to be contracted out (e.g. hydrology to help identify preferential overland flow pathways, or options appraisal to help identify the most cost-effective diffuse pollution mitigation measures). The facilitator time for managing this outsourcing, and the cost of the contracts, are both eligible                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                          |
|                                                 | Once the diffuse pollution risks have been identified within the catchment an overall plan should be produced.<br><br>In addition to generic requirements, the plan should:<br>- highlight any gaps where diffuse pollution risks have not been able to be addressed, and explain the reasons<br>- describe any ongoing maintenance that will require to be undertaken<br>- seek multiple benefits, by considering how the proposed works could be amended or expanded to deliver greater public benefits and / or better value for money | Draft plan, record of consultation, completed final plan |
| Promotion and securing additional participation | Depending on the options implemented, it may be appropriate to organise and provide training for participants (and maybe other local land managers).<br><br>This will be particularly important where specific management or maintenance is required to ensure effectiveness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                          |

## Assessment criteria

| Criteria for assessing whether the proposed project 'has the potential to make a significant contribution to' the Catchment Management for Water Quality priority |                                                                                     |                                                    |                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Criteria                                                                                                                                                          | High                                                                                | Medium                                             | Low                                                                                               |
| Scale – what proportion of the catchment (experiencing the pollution issues identified) is targeted by the application                                            | Greater than 60 per cent                                                            | 30 to 60 per cent                                  | Less than 30 per cent                                                                             |
| Potential to improve water quality                                                                                                                                | Actions well located and targeted to tackle the diffuse pollution issues identified | Medium potential                                   | Location and targeting of actions of limited relevance to the diffuse pollution issues identified |
| Strategy for delivery of the management plan                                                                                                                      | Proposal includes a well-planned strategy                                           | Proposal includes an ad-hoc or incomplete strategy | Proposal does not address strategy                                                                |
| Strategy for post-Environmental Co-operation Action Fund monitoring and maintenance                                                                               | Proposal includes a well-planned strategy                                           | Proposal includes an ad-hoc or incomplete strategy | Proposal does not address strategy                                                                |

## Monitoring requirements

Progress against the project's key deliverables will be monitored through the quarterly claims process and the verification required for these.

In addition, an annual report will be required. The format of this is to be published shortly, but will provide a progress overview, as well as explanations for any variation from the agreed plan.

The annual report should include, where appropriate:

- updated mapping showing progress in respect of measures implemented / options approved, including any diffuse pollution risks that have been identified but not addressed. Where significant

issues have arisen, the annual report should cover how these are being addressed through adaptive management

## Application requirements

In addition to generic application requirements you should include:

- mapping of all water bodies within the overall project area, highlighting any areas of land and diffuse pollution risks excluded
- the map and accompanying legend / text should identify any diffuse pollution risks that are already known or anticipated

## Appropriate minimum spatial scale

Due to the nature of diffuse pollution, to make a meaningful difference it is important that action is taken at the catchment scale. Due to the wide variation in catchments, such as size, land use, diffuse pollution risks, physical characteristics etc, it is difficult to state a minimum spatial scale.

Clearly, however, those projects which tackle a greater proportion of a catchment (or key targeted parts of a catchment which pose greater diffuse pollution risks) will have a greater chance of achieving improvements to water quality.

You should demonstrate that the proposed scale of your project will be sufficient to achieve the stated aims of the project.

## Further information

- [Farming and Water Scotland](#)
- [Prevention of Environmental Pollution from Agricultural Activity \(PEPFAA\) code of practice](#)
- [Farm Soils Plan](#)
- [Forests and Water Guidelines](#) – Forestry Commission
- [Controlled Activities Regulations practical guide](#) – Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- [Forestry Grant Scheme](#)
- [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme](#)
- [Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#) – Environment Agency

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