

Scoring criteria for 2021 AECS application round

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

Note – The scoring criteria for 2015-2019 is on a separate page and the scoring criteria for Improving Public Access is on a separate page.

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Introduction

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use to assess AECS applications received in 2021. Due to the nature of this round, applications will be scored separately for:

- Protected Areas (Designated sites)
- Applications to manage priority bird species outwith designated sites
- Farmland waders on established grassland wader projects
- Corncrake
- Corn bunting
- Organic farming
- Slurry storage
- Improving Public Access

If you have any queries please contact your local [RPID office](#) or [NatureScot](#) (formerly SNH)

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme scoring criteria

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use to assess all Agri-Environment Climate Scheme applications received in 2021.

Protected Areas (designated sites i.e. SSSIs and European sites*) *formally known as Natura sites.

SSSIs and European sites contain a list of qualifying features which can be accessed through SiteLink and applications must demonstrate how the management proposed will directly benefit these features. Normally such management will be within the designated site boundary; however, occasionally features such as birds or freshwater will require management of land outwith the boundary and this is also eligible for funding.

Applications for protected areas (designated sites) in AECS 2021 application round will potentially be non-competitive and only require scoring if the scheme is oversubscribed.

Applications to manage for Priority Bird Species outwith designated sites

Farmland Waders in established grassland wader projects

In AECS 2021, applications to benefit farmland wader birds are restricted to existing and new participants in established recognised wader restoration projects within the [wader target areas as listed](#). (MS Word, Size: 599.5 kB)

Applications will be considered under the following categories

1. Continuity

This category seeks to secure well established management practices within wader projects. Points are awarded for those applicants returning from an expiring 2015 or 2016 prefixed AECS contract which included management for waders. For clarity, no points will be awarded to applicants who rejected the opportunity in 2020 to extend their contract for a further year

2. Collaboration

Points will be awarded based on the number of holdings that you are collaborating with and the locations of collaborators must be within 5km of your holding at the nearest point as the wader flies. Each collaborator must hold an active AECS contract from the 2017, 2018 or 2019 application rounds or else they must be a new or returning applicant to AECS in 2021.

3. Vulnerable Priority Species

Points will be awarded for the diversity of wader species on your holding. The vulnerable priority species are: curlew, lapwing, redshank, oystercatcher and snipe. This information must be confirmed by staff from the wader project you participate in or else you must submit survey records (from within the last 5 years) from BTO or from an NGO/project officer/ecologist.

4. Suitability

Points will be awarded for plans where the proposed sites meet the optimum requirements for waders. Waders prefer open sites.

5. Grazing management for wader grazed grassland fields

Points will be awarded for management that reduces the risk of trampling of nests by livestock.

[Score sheet for waders. \(PDF, Size: 228.7 kB\)](#)

Corncrakes

Applications will be considered under the following categories

1. Continuity

This category seeks to secure well established management practices to benefit corncrakes. Points are awarded for those applicants returning from an expiring 2015 or 2016 prefixed AECS contract which included management for corncrakes. For clarity, no score will be awarded to applicants who rejected the opportunity in 2020 to extend their contract for a further year

2. Collaboration

Points will be awarded based on the number of holdings that you are collaborating with and the locations of collaborators must be within 5km of your holding at the nearest point as the corncrake flies. Each collaborator must hold an active AECS contract from the 2017, 2018 or 2019 application rounds or else they must be a new or returning applicant to AECS in 2021.

3. Corncrake beneficial options

To be awarded points you will need to include some or all of the following key options for corncrakes: Corncrake Mown Grassland, Corncrake Grazing Management, Management of Cover for Corncrake

4. Optimum management for Corncrake mown grassland

Points are awarded in recognition of a longer management period before mowing as this increases the likelihood of a second corncrake brood in the breeding year

[Corncrake score sheet \(PDF, Size: 48.3 kB\)](#)

Corn Buntings

Applications will be considered under the following categories

1. Continuity

This category seeks to secure well established management practices to benefit corn buntings. Points are awarded for those applicants returning from an expiring 2015 or 2016 prefixed AECS contract which included management for corn buntings. For clarity, no score will be awarded to applicants who rejected the opportunity in 2020 to extend their contract for a further year.

2. Collaboration

Points will be awarded based on the number of holdings that you are collaborating with and the locations of collaborators must be within 5km of your holding at the nearest point as the corn bunting flies. Each collaborator must hold an active AECS contract from the 2017, 2018 or 2019 application rounds or else they must be a new or returning applicant to AECS in 2021.

3. Corn bunting beneficial options

To be awarded points you will need to include some or all of the following key options which benefit corn buntings: Corn Buntings Mown Grassland, Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds, Grass Strips in Arable Fields, Beetlebanks, Retention of Winter Stubbles for Wildlife and Water Quality, Unharvested Conservation Headlands for Wildlife, Forage Brassica Crops for Farmland Birds, Species rich grassland management.

Additional points will be awarded if your options are targeted where they would best support corn buntings on your land and you have a written [endorsement \(PDF, Size: 707.3 kB\)](#) from the RSPB corn bunting recovery project officer before submitting your application. Advice when considering drawing up your application is available from RSPB by emailing Yvonne.Stephan@rspb.org.uk who will also provide the written endorsement.

4. Participation in the corn bunting recovery project

To be awarded points you will need to be in the corn bunting recovery project area and have had your proposal endorsed in writing by the [RSPB corn bunting project](#) officer before you submit your application. The RSPB project officer must be contacted in good time and can be reached at Yvonne.Stephan@rspb.org.uk.

[Score sheet for corn bunting \(PDF, Size: 152.9 kB\)](#)

Scoring criteria for organic farming

Organic applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

Scale of delivery

In 2021 points will be awarded based on the proportion of your holding that will be managed organically.

Additional points will be awarded based on the amount of land on your holding that will be managed under organic conversion or organic conversion.

[Score sheet for organics \(MS Word, Size: 47.4 kB\)](#)

Scoring criteria for slurry stores

The slurry storage element of applications will be scored separately. 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.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Slurry-storage-scoring-criteria---score-sheet---30-May-2017.xlsx> Criteria for slurry storage

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