

Funding under this scheme

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

Introduction

The funding under AECS will help to:

- deliver the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy by supporting appropriate management for vulnerable and iconic species and habitats, strengthening ecological networks, controlling invasive non-native species and enhancing the condition of protected nature sites
- contribute to Scotland's world-leading climate change targets by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and securing carbon stores in peatlands and other organic soils
- meet obligations to improve water quality under the Scotland River Basin Management Plan by reducing diffuse pollution
- control flooding through natural flood risk management
- support organic farming
- preserve the historic environment
- improve public access (*note the Improving Public Access element is not available for 2025 round applicants*)

Funding falls into two categories:

- annual payments for management options
- payments for capital costs

Please also refer to the [Claims and Payments page](#) .

Separate funding is also available towards the cost of the following types of plan:

- Farm Environment Assessment (FEA)
- Moorland Management Plan
- Lowland Bog Management Plan

However, you may only claim funding for the above plans if you meet the conditions which are explained in the [Claims and Payments page](#) . The web page also lists the payment rates for these types of plans.

Annual payments

Successful applicants will receive annual payments for the [management options](#) in your contract. These payments will be set at a standard cost in your contract as per the standard rates detailed in the [management options webpages](#).

Capital items

[Capital items](#) are one-off activities that can be claimed for and paid once they have been satisfactorily completed. Virtually all capital items are funded on the basis of a standard cost, as shown within the rules for each individual capital item.

Any capital expenditure incurred before your contract is in place is ineligible.

For all applications, only essential capital items will be accepted.

For agri-environment type applications this would include:

- Capital items that are directly required to deliver the management option, such as the capital item Creation of Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds which is essential for the Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds option
- Essential complimentary capital items, such as Creation of Wader Scrapes or Cutting of Rush Pasture
- Capital items that are essential to deliver the outcome of your application

It is not anticipated that applicants returning to the scheme from expired or expiring AECS contracts would seek funding for the same capital items in the same locations as in the original contract. The exception would be where the same capital item is required in order to deliver essential ongoing management under the new application.

Some capital items are available throughout the country. However, some are targeted to particular locations. You can only apply for the targeted capital items if they are listed under your MLC on the Targeting tool webpage (note that non-targeted capital items are not listed). The [capital items webpage](#) shows which items are targeted.

Actual costs capital items

There are three exceptions to standard capital costs, where actual capital costs may be used instead:

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation)
2. Scheduled Monuments located on designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European sites)
3. Other capital items where there are no standard costs available

For actual cost capital items the [guidance on quotes must be followed](#).

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites

The Scottish Government is committed to bringing designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites) into favourable condition. In certain circumstances the standard payment rates for capital items are unlikely to cover the real costs of the works for these sites.

These circumstances include:

- remoteness of the area of land on which the work will be undertaken or awkward / rough terrain getting to site – for example island location, lack of local contractors resulting in travel and subsistence for contractors when undertaking the works, longer time to access work site, difficult to deliver materials
- awkward, rough or fragile terrain on site making it necessary to, for example, use specialist contractors, work at a slower rate, avoid disturbance to neighbouring areas, use matting to protect ground
- other conditions – for example vegetation removal from a large area of cliff which has very small area on a map

In such exceptional circumstances we will consider supporting higher, actual capital costs, where all of the following conditions apply:

- these activities support action on, or adjacent to, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites (designated sites) aimed at bringing the special features of interest into favourable condition, or maintaining favourable condition of features. Your case officer will confirm this with relevant staff in NatureScot
- you provide an adequate demonstration of the circumstances which justify why the standard payments rates are not sufficient. For larger projects, where there are different distinguishable elements, you may have to use standard costs for those elements for which you cannot provide an appropriate justification for the use of actual capital costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes [in line with the guidance on quotes](#)
- you provide a comparison with the standard payment rate for the same activity, which demonstrates that the cost of undertaking the required activity is significantly higher than this
- the item must be in the list below

A specification for each activity is provided below:

- [Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams](#)
- [Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Light Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Intermediate and Heavy Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody vegetation – Removal from Site of Cut Vegetation](#)

- [Matting to Prevent Damage to Bogs](#)
- [Moving or Realigning Ditches](#)
- [Deer Census – Helicopter Counts](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for Deer Management](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised \(Formerly Mechanised or Chemical\)*](#)
- [Manual Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Mechanised Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Foliar Spray / Treatment](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Stem Injection Eradication – Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Scare and Temporary Electric Fencing](#)
- [Stock Fence](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Stock Fence](#)
- [Rabbit-proofing an Existing or New Stock or Deer Fence](#)
- [Deer Fence](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Deer Fence](#)

*Chemical control of Bracken is no longer funded through AECS following the decision by the manufacturers of Asulam not to pursue authorisation for the chemical in the UK.

Please note that we will usually only fund standard costs for fencing. Actual costs will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

You should discuss any such proposals with [NatureScot](#) at an early stage **before** submitting your application, to ensure that what you are proposing is appropriate for the designated site features so that you can confidently proceed to getting quotes for the work.

2. Scheduled Monuments located on designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites) In exceptional circumstances we will consider supporting higher, actual capital costs where the method of work required to avoid damaging a Scheduled Monument site is complex and can be justified as incurring a higher financial burden. For higher actual costs to be considered under such circumstances, all of the following conditions apply:

- these activities, in the form of one of the capital items listed below, support action on, or adjacent to, Scheduled Monuments on designated sites which aim to have a long term positive benefit / impact on the environment and the condition / management of scheduled monuments and to also have a long term wider environmental benefit.
- you should include a letter of support from Historic Environment Scotland, as certain works require scheduled monument consent. Your case officer will confirm this with relevant staff in Historic Environment Scotland
- you provide an adequate demonstration of the circumstances which justify why the standard payments rates are not sufficient. For larger projects, where there are different distinguishable elements, you may have to use standard costs for those elements for which you cannot provide an appropriate justification for the use of standard costs
- you provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the guidance on quotes
- you provide a comparison with the standard payment rate for the same activity, which demonstrates that the cost of undertaking the required activity is significantly higher than this
- the item must be in the list below

A specification for each activity is provided below:

- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Light Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation – Primary treatment – Intermediate and Heavy Vegetation](#)
- [Control of Scrub / Woody vegetation – Removal from Site of Cut Vegetation](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised \(Formerly Mechanised or Chemical\)*](#)
- [Manual Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Mechanised Eradication of Rhododendron – Light, Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Foliar Spray / Treatment](#)
- [Rhododendron Control – Stem Injection Eradication – Medium or Difficult](#)
- [Rabbit-proofing an Existing or New Stock or Deer Fence](#)

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You should discuss any such proposals with Historic Environment Scotland at an early stage before submitting your application, to ensure that what you are proposing is appropriate for the site so that you can confidently proceed to getting quotes for the work.

3. Other capital items where no standard costs are available There are seven capital items where no standard costs are available and you will have to claim actual costs. These are:

- [Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- [River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- [Restoring \(Protecting\) River Banks \(engineered log jams\)](#)
- [Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems \(installation of kerbs / channels / cross drains\)](#)
- [Pesticide Handling Facilities \(drive-over biobeds\)](#)
- [Alternative Watering \(electrical powered pump system\)](#)
- [Alternative Watering \(water trough\)](#)

You must provide a detailed breakdown of the work required, the associated costs and supporting quotes in line with the [guidance on quotes](#)

[Recent changes](#)

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