

Further requirements for applicants

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Introduction

When you apply for this scheme, there are a number of things you need to consider.

The [Essential Information](#) for applications and the [Checklist of Requirements](#) highlights key points to consider before applying to the Scheme. The guidance below explains the following items in more detail:

- The consents and licences you may need.
- Taking account of Protected Species.
- Guidance on quotes for actual cost capital items.

Consents and licences

When you first think of the work that you wish to progress through this scheme, if you consider that a consent or licence may be required, you should contact the relevant organisation for advice as soon as possible.

Their staff or their websites will provide details on consent / licensing requirements in your specific circumstances and advise on how to proceed.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you have any necessary authorisation for the work that you wish to carry out.

Some examples of where you might require a particular authorisation include:

- felling licence from Scottish Forestry for removing heavy scrub under the Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation capital item.
- abstraction licence from the [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) (SEPA) under the Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon capital item.
- consents from [Historic Environment Scotland](#) (HES) relating to [Scheduled Monuments \(PDF, Size: 799.9 kB\)](#) (Please also refer to the [Designations page](#))
- if you apply for Ditch Blocking for peatland restoration you will need approval from your planning authority, under the [Prior Notification and Prior Approval process](#) .
- licences for trapping of birds or mammals (see below*)

Please note:

If your application includes proposals for land in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or European site (SPA or SPC), we will consider any effects on these sites. Please refer to the guidance on [designated areas](#). If your application is successful and you are awarded a contract, you will not need consent from NatureScot for the activities covered by the contract.

If you are in any doubt about whether your proposed works will affect a protected species, refer to the guidance on protected species (see below).

If you have already received consent or written approval from a consenting authority you should upload a copy of the relevant documentation to accompany your online application. You should make sure that you keep a copy available for inspection. If you have not received a necessary consent or licence from the relevant authority by the time you submit your application, you must submit evidence that you are in discussion with the relevant authority about this. However, for the avoidance of doubt, you must ensure that you hold any required licence or consent before you start the management for which a licence or consent is required.

* If applying to control birds or mammals under the AECS Predator Control option, check that you can meet the relevant licensing requirements. Please note the following points:

- for crow trapping, under General Licence GL01/2024, trap operators must register with NatureScot and then display the registration number on the traps. Also, if trapping within one of the European sites (SPAs or SACs) listed in Annex 2 of GL01/2024 you must comply with the Standing Conditions for the site
- stoat trapping : trapping of stoats is now controlled through General Licence GL14/2024. Please note, there are changes to the types of traps which can be used to take or kill stoats. Most significantly, Fenn traps can no longer be used to take or kill stoats
- as of 25 November 2024, it is illegal to set any snare in Scotland
- if trapping within one of the European sites (SPAs or SACs) listed in Annex 2 of GL01/2024 you must comply with the Standing Conditions for the site

Protected species

There are several pieces of legislation giving protection to species found in Scotland. In many cases it is an offence to kill or capture animals including birds, or to uproot plants. The law also protects some wild creatures from disturbance or harassment, or disturbance of their nests or resting places. Examples of commonly encountered species are shown below. Further details can be found on the [NatureScot protected species webpage](#).

You should therefore consider whether the management options or capital items you propose will affect any protected species. Please take into account the timings and locations of works (for example avoiding disturbance of birds during the breeding season). You should note the presence of any protected species in your application.

The [interactive tools on NatureScot's SNHi](#) may be helpful, over and above your own knowledge of the land and [NatureScot area staff](#) can provide further guidance where necessary.

You must organise an appropriate ecological survey of the area if you know that your land supports protected species which may be affected by your proposal.

The survey report should include ways to mitigate unavoidable damage or disturbance and suggest ideas to compensate for any losses. The report should also identify any licensing requirements which might allow the work to go ahead in spite of the protected species.

You should also submit the report along with your application.

Please contact the [NatureScot licensing team](#) if you need more advice on survey requirements and licensing.

Commonly encountered protected species include:

- Bats, otters, great crested newts and natterjack toads – these are protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).
- Wild birds protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Red squirrels, pine martens, water voles and other animals – these are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended).
- Plants listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Beavers are fully protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). This protection also extends to lodges and burrows used for breeding and can apply to dams.

Quotes

Before applying for any actual cost capital items, please read the [Funding under this scheme guidance](#), to check that you meet the eligibility requirements, and please ensure that your application includes adequate justification for the use of actual capital costs. You must submit written competitive quotations for the actual cost items included in your application to demonstrate that the project costs are reasonable.

There must be no conflict of interest between the various suppliers providing the quotes, or between the applicants or their agent and the suppliers. A conflict of interest is a situation where a third party, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably consider that such an interest could unfairly influence actions or decisions. For example, an agent must not tender a quote for works and this also applies to any individual or contractor who has a close connection with the business.

If the cost is £10,000 or less a minimum of two valid written quotations is required. If the cost is more than £10,000, you must submit a minimum of three valid written quotations.

Only in exceptional circumstances is one quotation acceptable and the criteria that must be met is set out under '**Exceptions - acceptance of one quote**' below.

You must submit a Quotations table using the template provided below.



[Quotations table - blank template \(MS Word, Size: 50.7 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2023-quotations-table---blank-template.docx> Template document



[Quotations table - example \(PDF, Size: 156.6 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2023-quotations-table-example.pdf> Example table

You must ask all suppliers to quote on a clear specification with works/requirements accurately described, the quotes must refer to this specification, and you must provide a copy of the specification with your application.

For items/services other than water troughs, [Fair Work First \(FWF\)](#) will apply to any goods or services purchased or obtained in relation to your AECS contract if your application is successful. You must ensure that any suppliers and/or contractors involved in servicing the requirements of the contract comply with FWF.

The case officer will be looking for the following:

- a completed quotations table summarising the quotes information - see example
- quotes are addressed to the applicant
- quotes are written / printed, on business headed notepaper and clearly originated from a reputable supplier who can deliver the items or work
- quotes are clear and meet all the tender specifications as they must be comparable on a like-for-like basis
- no missing elements - any costs not included in the total estimated costs on your application will not be eligible for funding
- no ineligible elements
- cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
- where there is an equivalent standard cost capital item your specification must use the same unit of measurement as the standard cost item.
- for larger projects, the quote must include a schedule which breaks down costs for each of the main stages or capital elements of the work (these can be claimed on completion of each stage of work as these appear in the schedule of works)
- suppliers must confirm for how long the quote is valid
- whether the price includes appropriate VAT rate. Details of any VAT to be paid must be shown against the relevant items. If you are VAT registered you must include the lowest cost in your application net of VAT. If you are not VAT registered and have confirmed this during the customer registration process, you may claim the full cost including VAT

- for capital items intended to benefit the environment and the long term management of scheduled monuments on designated sites (SSSI or European sites - see Funding under this scheme), there must be a justification for using actual capital costs and the quotes must be sufficiently detailed to show the methodology and specialist requirements

When assessing your application, the case officer will consider whether the proposed costs are reasonable, taking into account other cost information for that activity.

If the quotes supplied are insufficient in any way, your case officer will advise you of this. If you do not remedy any deficiencies promptly and supply the case officer with the required documentation the relevant costs may be amended to standard costs, or not be considered as part of the application which may in exceptional circumstances, risk rejection of the whole application.

If your application is successful, funding will be based on the lowest valid quote received (subject to confirmation that the costs are considered to be reasonable). You can choose to proceed with a more expensive company, if you wish, but the amount we pay will not exceed maximum amount / total cost per 'item' shown on the schedule of your work in your contract.

Exceptions – acceptance of one quote

Subject to your case officer's approval, one quote may be admissible when:

1. The specifications are so specialised that only limited suppliers are available and it would be unreasonable or impracticable to find a second or third quote. For example, when the supplier is a contractor required to carry out works in a remote area where only one qualified contractor is available and the scale of works would not attract contractors from further away.

The case officer will still be expected to check value for money against standard rates for similar activities elsewhere, such as those published in the [SAC Consulting Farm Management Handbook](#), whilst taking into account the remote location factor.

2. The individual item value is below £1,000 and you can justify why you have little alternative but to source individual items from a single reputable supplier. You must demonstrate why the work cannot be more easily tendered in larger parts and two or three quotes obtained.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Consents and Licences	Updates regarding predator control and snaring ban.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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