

Moorland Management

Date published: 30 January, 2025

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

Aim

The aim of this option is to benefit a range of moorland habitats, including upland heath and peatland habitats, by maintaining appropriate levels of wild and domestic stock. It is also intended to protect sensitive peatland areas at risk of soil erosion from herbivore trampling and vehicle tracking.

Moorlands cover a range of habitat types from dry and wet heath through to blanket bog. It can also include some grasslands. Sustainable grazing levels and careful use of vehicles will ensure that both the vegetation and soils remain as intact and undisturbed as possible. Moorlands support a range of important wildlife and biodiversity, and peatlands in particular can contribute to climate change by storing carbon.

This option is an entry option for all upland management, including peatland restoration, where livestock and / or deer are present. It provides a foundation to build in additional options or capital items where further benefit to the habitat or species present can be achieved from undertaking works such as grip / ditch blocking, stock reduction, muirburn or summer cattle grazing. A full list is given below.

Eligibility

Land that is rough grazing and where livestock and / or deer are present is eligible.

You should not include areas of land covering rocks, scree, water, dense bracken etc. We will check this using the same approach we use to check land for the Basic Payment Scheme.

Spatial targeting



[Map of target area – Moorland Management \(PDF, Size: 1.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Updated-targeting-map---Moorland-management-16-12-2015.pdf>

This option is available within the target area shown on this map. It may be possible to apply for this option outside this area where there is strong justification as endorsed by NatureScot.

You can check if this option is available on your holding using the search targeting tool which can be found on any of the following AECS guidance pages:

[AECS Home](#)

[Eligibility](#)

[How to Apply](#)

[Management Options and Capital Items](#)

[Capital Items](#)

Application requirements

You must prepare and submit for approval a moorland management plan using the template below and provide all supporting documentation requested.

Where livestock are present, the plan must detail your current livestock numbers.

You must also identify on a 1:10,000 map the location of proposed supplementary feeding sites and routes where you plan regular vehicle use.

**Moorland Management Plan (MS Word, Size: 119.3 kB)**

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2024-Moorland-Management-Plan.docx> [Plan template]

You must also submit the following plans where appropriate:

Deer Management: You must submit a Deer Management Plan if you are responsible for controlling deer numbers **and** you are applying to AECS for Moorland Management for deer or for deer and livestock.

You **must** seek advice from a NatureScot Wildlife Management Officer before applying. We advise you do this as soon as the application round opens to allow enough time. The deadline for NatureScot advice on deer is 30 April.

If you are responsible for controlling deer numbers but *not* seeking AECS funding for deer management you do not need to complete the Deer Plan template; however, your Moorland Management Plan must detail current deer numbers, their location and current and proposed deer cull targets.

**Deer Management Plan Template 2025 (MS Word, Size: 89.1 kB)**

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Deer-Management-Plan-Template-2025-onwards-3.docx>

Muirburn and Heather Cutting: Muirburn cannot be funded through AECS. Only the Heather Cutting element of the capital item is available in the 2025 AECS round. If you plan to undertake muirburn or heather cutting at your own expense on a designated site within your AECS application area, during the lifetime of the AECS contract, you **MUST** submit a Muirburn Plan, so that there is a record of where and when work will take place, to allow the case officer to assess whether this is appropriate to the site. For non-designated sites, you must provide detail within the Moorland management plan of any muirburn you intend to undertake.

**Muirburn and Heather Cutting Plan (MS Word, Size: 169.4 kB)**

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-update-2022---Muirburn-plan-template---Jan-2022-2.docx> [Plan Template]

Bracken Management: Only mechanical or manual control of bracken are available for funding in the 2025 AECS round. If you are applying for mechanised or manual control of bracken you must submit a bracken plan using the template below.

**Bracken Management Plan (MS Word, Size: 124.1 kB)**

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2024-Bracken-Management-Plan.docx> [Plan Template]

Ditch Blocking:**Ditch Blocking Plan (MS Word, Size: 124.7 kB)**

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-2024-Ditch-Blocking-Plan.docx> [Plan template]

Below is a real life example Moorland management and grazing plan with associated maps to assist you. **Please note this uses the previous version of the template so is purely illustrative to indicate the level of detail required. A revised version of the completed template will be uploaded to the [Essential information for applications page](#).**

[Moorland Management and Grazing Plan 2018 \(PDF, Size: 773.3 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS-edits-2022-----MMP-example---11-Jan-2022.pdf> [Example map]

[Habitat Vegetation Example one \(PDF, Size: 550.4 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map01-MM01_Habitat_Vegetation.pdf [Example map]

[Habitat Vegetation Example two \(PDF, Size: 635.4 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map02-MM02_Habitat_Vegetation.pdf [Example map]

[Vegetation Condition Assessment Example one \(PDF, Size: 480.8 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map03-MM01_Vegetation_Condition_Assessment.pdf [Example map]

[Vegetation Condition Assessment Example two \(PDF, Size: 579.6 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map04-MM02_Vegetation_Condition_Assessment.pdf [Example map]

[Grazing Management example 1 \(PDF, Size: 551.5 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map05-MM01_Grazing_Management.pdf [Example map]

[Grazing Management example 2 \(PDF, Size: 636.4 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map06-MM02_Grazing_Management.pdf [Example map]

[Access Routes and Feed sites Example 1 \(PDF, Size: 464.3 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map07a-MM01_Access_Routes_and_Feed_Sites.pdf [Example map]

[Access Routes and Feed sites Example 2 \(PDF, Size: 596.9 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map07b-MM02_Access_Routes_and_Feed_Sites.pdf [Example map]

[Bracken Management \(PDF, Size: 334.2 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/SNH_AECS_2019_MMP_Example_Map08-MM01_Bracken_Management.pdf [Example map]

Management requirements

You must manage the same location and extent each year for the duration of your contract.

- where livestock are present, you must maintain agricultural livestock activity on the area subject to payment
- where livestock are present, you must adhere to the grazing regime which defines livestock units and grazing dates in your moorland management and grazing plan
- you must not carry out supplementary feeding outwith the area(s) shown in your plan, unless you have prior written approval
- you must not cause vehicle rutting out with the vehicle use areas identified in your plan (the definition of rutting is where the soil is both depressed and bare soil is exposed)
- where you are applying for payment under this option for managing deer, you must maintain deer culls as agreed in your plan and send your annual cull returns to NatureScot. Please [submit your returns online](#).
- you must not cut peat without prior approval
- if approval has been given to cut peat by hand, you must replace the turfs on top of the cut surface, with the vegetation side on top
- you must not undertake muirburn, unless you have prior approval
- do not plant trees, unless you have prior approval
- do not undertake any drainage work, unless you have prior approval
- you must maintain a diary

Payment

You can claim:

- where managing livestock only: £3.60 per hectare per year
- where managing deer only: £1.24 per hectare per year
- where managing deer and livestock: £4.84 per hectare per year

There are separate capital items to support moorland management, which could include, but are not restricted to:

- [Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams](#)
- [Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams](#)
- [Muirburn and Heather Cutting](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken – Manual](#)
- [Primary Treatment of Bracken - Mechanised \(formerly Mechanised or Chemical\)](#)
- [Open-range Deer Management](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for Deer Management](#)
- [Deer Census – Helicopter Counts](#)
- [Stock Bridges for Bog, Fen or Wetland Management](#)

The following management options can support moorland management:

- [Stock Disposal](#)
- [Away Wintering Sheep](#)
- [Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle](#)
- [Predator Control](#)

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- where livestock are present, you have maintained agricultural livestock activity on the area subject to payment
- where livestock are present, you have adhered to the grazing regime which defines livestock units and grazing dates in your moorland management plan

- you have not carried out supplementary feeding out with the area(s) shown in your plan, unless you have prior written approval
- you have not caused vehicle rutting out with the vehicle use areas identified in your plan (the definition of rutting is where the soil is both depressed and bare soil is exposed)
- where you are applying for payment under this option for managing deer, you have maintained deer culls as agreed in your plan and sent your annual cull returns to NatureScot. Please [submit your returns online](#).
- you have not cut peat without prior approval
- if approval has been given to cut peat by hand, you have replaced the turfs on top of the cut surface, with the vegetation side on top
- you have not undertaken muirburn, unless you have prior approval
- you have not planted trees, unless you have prior approval
- you have not undertaken any drainage work, unless you have prior approval
- you have maintained a diary

Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance is available for this option.](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Application requirements	<p>Updated moorland management template, Deer Management Plan template, Bracken management and Ditch Blocking Plan templates.</p> <p>Updated guidance for Deer Management: You must seek advice from a NatureScot Wildlife Management Officer before applying. We advise you do this as soon as the application round opens to allow enough time. The deadline for NatureScot advice on deer is 30 April.</p> <p>Updated guidance for Muirburn and Heather cutting: Muirburn cannot be funded through AECS. Only the Heather Cutting element of the capital item is available in the 2024 AECS round</p> <p>Updated guidance for Bracken Management: Only mechanical or manual control of bracken are available for funding in the 2024 AECS round.</p> <p>Moorland Management Plan example - A revised version of the completed template will be uploaded to the Essential information for applications page.</p>

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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