Common application mistakes

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Introduction

To make sure your application is accepted at your first point of submission, it's important that it is properly completed, with all the information needed.

Before you start your submission, please take into account the following tips and also review the Common mistakes section.

Top tips for submitting an AECS application:

- familiarise yourself with the scheme guidance (and check that you are using the latest version in place at the time of the opening of the particular application window)
- complete all sections of the online application correctly. For example, if some of the area proposed for management is held under secure tenancy and the rest is owned select both options
- contact your local RPID or Scottish Natural Heritage office if you have a query or difficulty in uploading documents (taking a note of the method of contact, date, time and any other details)
- double check that all the required documents accompanying your application meet the specific standards referred to in the scheme guidance and have been uploaded or submitted before the application deadline. The latest templates should be used (see the checklist of requirements)
- ensure maps are annotated in accordance with the Farm Environment Assessment and Diffuse Pollution Assessment guidance (where applicable) and as part of the individual option and capital item requirements

Common mistakes

Below are some of the most common mistakes made when submitting an AECS application. These can result in your application being rejected, so it's worth taking the time to get it right.

Documents required that relate to the ownership/tenancy of the land

A common issue with applications is a failure to submit documents related to the ownership/tenancy of the land:

- a completed landlord declaration form or copy of lease
- crofting shareholders support/evidence
- a fully completed shared boundary agreement for stock fencing or hedging

Please check the guidance for occupancy of land for more information.

Occupancy of land

A common error regarding the submission of a lease has been when it is submitted for another purpose and it is also to be used in support of an AECS application.

To clarify, for this to be acceptable, the applicant is responsible for making sure that the lease submitted already meets the AECS requirements.

The applicant must also make sure that sufficient details are entered in the Proof of secure tenancy section of the online AECS application to alert the case officer of this request – information on the lease's earlier submission and that it is also to be used for AECS.

A common error for Improving Public Access (IPA) applicants was failing to have a contractual licence (a third party agreement) in place.

Documents with evidence of collaboration

To be awarded points for collaboration, there must be evidence submitted which will include a map and a supporting statement from the collaborating business(es).

Designated sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Natura sites (SPA or SAC)

If you are applying for funding to manage plants or wildlife on a designated site, you are strongly advised to speak to Scottish Natural Heritage before preparing an application.

This will help ensure the management you are proposing is appropriate and all issues are being addressed, and will reduce the risk of the application being rejected.

National priority points

When applying for biodiversity in order to secure the points you must make sure that:

- the Vulnerable Priority Species form is submitted
- your application includes relevant management/capital options for the particular species in question

Please check the guidance for vulnerable priority species for more information.

Vulnerable priority species

Documents required to support capital items

Where there is an actual cost capital item, you must provide the quotes in line with the scheme guidance . Missing or inadequate quotes for some items, such as water troughs or upland habitat impact assessment, may make your application ineligible.

Including items/options without checking their eligibility

Every option or item has guidance stating when they are eligible. Do not assume that similar options from previous schemes have retained the same eligibility requirements, always check the latest guidance.

Also, please pay attention to the best practice that is outlined in the supporting guidance for options and items, as this will help ensure that you meet the scheme requirements.

The table below shows common causes of errors relating to options and capital items:

Subject		Comments
Targeted options		If an option is not on the list for your holding, you cannot apply for it unless you submit an endorsement with your application. Otherwise the whole application may become ineligible. Please refer to the 'Endorsement' section of the AECS guidance to check when an 'Endorsement' may be available.
		If you are applying for several holdings, remember that an option may be eligible on the Main Location Code but not on the other Location Codes.

Management Options	Management options that require capital items	Ensure the relevant capital items are included. For example, the Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds option requires the Creation of Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds capital item.
	Water margins options	The summary tables must be fully completed, making it clear where the margins are of varying widths, and excluding the margin width required under GAEC.
	Wader grazed grassland options	For Wader grazed grassland applicants you must choose one of the three grazing options and provide detail in the-application.
Capital items	Fencing	This is not eligible if the existing stock or deer fencing is not derelict and would last the five years of the agreement.
	Fence removal	This is only eligible if it is required to deliver benefit to a habitat or in black grouse or capercaillie core areas and not to remove existing fencing so new fencing can be erected.
	Scare fencing	This item is only available alongside Restoring Drystone or Flagstone Dykes. For all other situations apply for temporary electric fencing.
	Hardstandings	There must be a diffuse pollution risk that requires hard standings to resolve.
	Sediment Ponds	Where sediment ponds have an integrated sediment trap, they need to be claimed separately as each has a different cost.