

Important Tips and Guidance for Applications

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 21 January, 2022

Date superseded: 23 January, 2023

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

The version of this page applicable to the AECS 2021 restricted round can be found in the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme full guidance archive

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Introduction

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

Before you start your submission, please take into account the following tips and common errors.

Please also refer to "[Checklist of Requirements](#)" and "[Further requirements for applicants](#)" which expand on the information provided below.

Top tips for submitting an AECS application

- Familiarise yourself with individual option and capital item guidance and full scheme guidance. Check that you are using the latest version for the 2022 round.
- [Designated sites](#) - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and European sites (SPA or SAC): If you are applying within a designated site, you are strongly recommended to make early contact with [NatureScot](#) , at least a month before the submission deadline to discuss your proposals. This will help ensure the management you are proposing is appropriate for the notified features of the site and that all issues are being addressed, and will reduce the risk of an application being rejected
- Deer management: if you are considering applying for deer management, you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot at least a month before the submission deadline to discuss your proposals. This will help ensure that deer proposals fit with the scheme requirements.
- Consult with relevant individuals/bodies to obtain any necessary documentation or approvals ahead of submitting your application Check [the further requirements page](#) which has information on consents and licences.
- 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

- 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. For documents where we provide a template, ensure that you use the latest version of the templates ([see also the Checklist of Requirements](#))
- For all management options and capital items which require an individual Management Plan to support your application, (e.g. Grazing Plan, Scrub Control Plan) you must use the relevant plan template and all the information requested in the template. Failure to do so may result in the plan being deemed not fit for purpose and the option or item being removed from your application. In some cases, it may result in the whole application being rejected.
- Ensure maps are created and annotated in accordance with the [Mapping guidance](#) and [Farm Environment Assessment](#) (FEA) guidance (where applicable). You must also meet mapping requirements as set out for each individual management option and capital item.
- Contact your local [RPID Area Office](#) or [NatureScot](#) regional office as early as possible if you have a query about the scheme. RPID Area Offices can also help if you have any difficulties in uploading supporting documents for your application.
- Check the Schedule of Works for your application before submitting your application, to make sure that it contains all the management options and capital items you wish to apply for, and that the proposed claim timings are correct. It is not possible to add options or capital items once the application has been submitted.
- It is essential that the application is prepared with the full involvement and understanding of the land manager responsible for delivering the work on the ground. The Case Officer's site visit will include a discussion with this person and if they are unaware of what has been included in the application or cannot deliver some options/items the full application will be rejected.
- If an application or its associated supporting documents contain many errors, or require significant changes to make the proposals eligible for funding, it will be deemed not fit for purpose and will be rejected. **Case officers are not able to make or allow significant changes within the rules of the scheme**

Common errors

Below are some of the most common errors 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. Below are some examples:

- a completed landlord declaration form or copy of lease
- crofting shareholders support/evidence
- a fully completed shared boundary agreement for march fencing or restoring drystone or flagstone dykes

Please check the guidance for [Occupancy of land](#) for more information.

A common error regarding the submission of a lease has been when it is obtained for another purpose and it is then 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 to be added about the lease's earlier submission to RPID and stating that it is also to be used for AECS.

Documents required to gain points as part of the Scoring Criteria

A common issue which can result in the failure to score points under the relevant Scoring Criteria categories is the absence of the relevant documentation. Examples of this are included below:

National priorities - Biodiversity: enhancing biodiversity in the wider countryside by conserving vulnerable priority species (VPS). In order to secure the points for enhancing biodiversity you must make sure that:

- the Vulnerable Priority Species form is submitted
- your application includes relevant management options or capital items for the species you have provided supporting information for

Please check the guidance for [vulnerable priority species](#) for more information.

Collaborative approach

To be awarded points for collaboration, the person leading on the collaborative project must correctly complete a Collaborative Management Plan (using the template in the Scoring Criteria webpage) along with a map or maps clearly showing the extent of the collaborative work proposed. The Plan must be agreed with all parties involved and must clearly demonstrate the contribution each participant applying to AECS will make. A copy of the completed Plan and map(s) must be submitted by each applicant involved in the collaborative project, along with their AECS application.

Including items/options without checking their eligibility

Every option or item has guidance stating when it is eligible. Always check the latest AECS guidance and do not assume it is unchanged since the last round..

It is also essential to read the supporting guidance for options and items, as this will help ensure that you meet the scheme requirements.

The table below shows common / potential causes of errors relating to options and capital items. If you are unsure, request advice from RPID or NatureScot.

Subject		Comments
Management options general		Ensure the specified supporting maps and tables are submitted (as explained on the Farm Environment Assessment webpage), where applicable
Management options general		Your management map(s) must very clearly show which options are being applied for and where. For rotational options, a separate map is useful, to show the location for each year
Targeted options		If an option is not on the list for your holding, you cannot apply for it unless you obtain an endorsement from NatureScot before you apply and then submit this with your application. Allow plenty of time to request the endorsement from NatureScot. We strongly advise you to contact NatureScot at least a month before the application submission deadline. Otherwise, there is a risk that you will not receive the endorsement before the deadline and the option may have to be rejected. Please refer to the ' Endorsement ' section of the AECS guidance to check when an 'Endorsement' is available. Endorsements are potentially available for any options that would benefit designated sites, but otherwise they are only available for a limited range of options.
Targeting tool		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 that you include any capital items which are essential to support a particular management option. 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, Wader and Wildlife mown grassland	Complete the Wader Management Plan (PDF, Size: 1.7 MB) to define the grazing regimes in the wader option fields and include photographs of these fields. A link to the plan template is included on the option pages. It has been slightly revised for the 2022 round.
	Wader grazed grassland, Wader and Wildlife mown grassland	Do not plant hedges around fields entered into these management options. To be awarded National priority VPS scoring points, you must exclude a 30m margin adjacent to trees, hedges or woodland in your claim area. This buffer must be clearly marked and labelled on your management map. In addition, for Wader Grazed Grassland you MUST complete the grazing calendar in the online application.
	Habitat Mosaic Management and Species-Rich Grassland Management	If you are applying for these options on hill and upland rough grazing land, you must seek an endorsement from NatureScot prior to applying. If the endorsement is awarded, you must submit this alongside your application. To ensure you receive the endorsement in time, you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot at least a month before the application submission deadline.
	Wader management on heath mosaics (within the Heath management option)	To apply for this option, fields must fall within the target area for the wader grazed grassland option and you must stipulate in your application which waders your plan will benefit. You must follow the grazing regime stated in the option. You cannot apply for this option on land previously managed under the Moorland Management option. Also, if the land has not been entered into the agri-environment scheme before, but is a large, heath/mire dominated area, then it should be entered under the Moorland management option. Failure to do so will result in the option being removed from the plan, which could jeopardise the whole application. If you are unsure of habitat eligibility, speak to NatureScot or RPID before applying.
	Moorland Management and associated options	Consult the option pages which are all being updated for the opening of the 2022 round. Due to the number of poor quality applications we have received, a revised Moorland Management Plan template (PDF, Size: 213.7 kB) has been developed and this MUST be used for 2022 applications. All relevant supporting documentation must be supplied at the time of application (e.g. flock records).
Capital Items	All capital items	For all applications, only essential capital items will be accepted. For agri-environment type applications this would include:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - Any other capital items that are essential to achieve the outcome of your application <p>Capital items are not eligible when selecting the Organic Maintenance option as this option supports the cost of maintaining an organic management system.</p> <p>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 in the Targetting tool webpage. (The capital items webpage shows which items are targeted.) Note that non-targeted capital items are not listed in the Targeting tool webpage.</p> <p>Capital work should all be delivered in year 1 of the contract, unless the webpage for a specific capital items says otherwise. For example, for peatland restoration (ditch blocking) if there is significant work, this can be spread over years 1 and 2, but not beyond.</p>
	Actual capital costs	Where there is an actual cost capital item, you must provide a robust justification of why standard costs cannot be used and provide the quotes and complete the quotations table in line with the scheme guidance. Items with missing or inadequate quotes for actual capital costs will not progress past the assessment stage and, in exceptional circumstances, may risk rejection of the whole application.
	Fencing	<p>If you have already received funding for fencing in your previous AECS contract, or there is a current stock fence in place and it is not derelict and would last the five years of an AECS agreement, then funding for a new stock fence will not be available.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, we may allow funding of a new fence to create a wider water margin where the existing fenced margin is too narrow. This does not apply if the margin was created with Rural Priorities funding and is being increased in width to meet GAEC 1 requirements.</p> <p>Where a new fence is permitted, you must remove and dispose of the existing fence appropriately - at your own cost.</p> <p>Stock Fencing costs are not permitted for wader options, corncrake options or corn bunting options. However temporary electric fencing is available under the temporary electric fencing element of the Scare and Temporary Electric Fencing capital item to new applicants and also to returning applicants proposing to manage new land under these option where only a part of the field is being managed.</p>
	Fence removal	This is only eligible if it is required to deliver benefit to a habitat or is in black

		grouse or capercaillie core areas. It cannot be used to fund removal of existing fencing so that 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.
	Control of Scrub or Woody Vegetation	Plan to undertake all scrub control on a site within the first two years of your contract, to prevent continuous seeding of shrub species.
	Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems Hard Standings Livestock Crossing Livestock Tracks Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems Pesticide Handling Facilities Water-use Efficiency Irrigation Lagoon	If applying for any of these options, you must submit a Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment
	Sediment Ponds	Where sediment ponds have an integrated sediment trap, they need to be claimed separately as each has a different cost.
Bracken Control		<p>If you adopt the manual treatment capital item, this must be undertaken annually.</p> <p>If you adopt the Chemical/ mechanised treatment capital item, primary treatment must be delivered in year 1 or 2 with a follow up treatment no less than two years later, i.e.</p> <p>Year one Primary then years three and five Follow up or Year two primary, year 4 Follow up</p> <p>All livestock must be excluded for 28 days after treatment with Asulam.</p> <p>From 2022 you must provide email confirmation from an aerial spraying contractor that they are able to deliver the work in the year noted. If this is not possible you must only apply for areas you can spray using ground-based treatments or apply for manual methods.</p> <p>Glyphosate cannot be used to treat bracken within AECS due to adverse impacts on non-target plants.</p> <p>Going forward, as part of the Emergency Authorisation for Asulam, those using the chemical may have to provide pre and post treatment survey data related to non-target plants, breeding birds and mammals. Consult the Bracken Control Group website for further information.</p> <p>Everyone using Asulam must submit a record to the Bracken Control Group with information on amount used/area treated etc.</p>
Muirburn		<p>Consult the option page for changes for 2022 and ensure a detailed Muirburn Plan is submitted.</p> <p>Do not overestimate the amount of hectareage that will be burned each year, as capital expenditure cannot be carried across from one year to another, so any underspend is effectively lost from the AECS budget</p>

[Previous versions](#)

Recent Changes

Section	Change
Including items/options without checking their eligibility	Extra text added mid Feb 2022 to 'Fencing' item in Table covering waders, corncrake and corn bunting options.
Whole page	Updated details for 2022 round

[Previous versions of this page](#)