

Farm Environment Assessment

This is an old version of the page

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

Introduction

You are required to prepare a Farm Environment Assessment to cover the whole of your holding if you are proposing to apply for any Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management options or capital items, unless you are only applying for the following options:

- * [Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- * [River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal](#)
- * [Restoring \(Protecting\) River Banks](#)
- [Organic Farming: Maintenance](#)
- [Organic Farming: Conversion](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for deer management](#) (as standalone capital item)
- [Wildcat friendly predator control](#), where this is the only option applied for
- *[Water - use Efficiency - Irrigation Lagoon](#)

*These options will also require a Diffuse pollution risk assessment - [see below](#)

Note:

If your farm business has a Business Registration Number that consists of several Location Codes, the Farm Environment Assessment needs to cover the entirety of any Location Codes included in your application.

Crofting applications:

If you are applying as a common grazing's committee, the Farm Environment Assessment should cover the whole of the common grazing's.

If you are applying as a single crofter with a common grazing apportionment (or designated cropped area), you should include the apportioned (or cropped area) in your Farm Environment Assessment.

FEA payments:

Payment for a Farm Environment Assessment Plan is not available to those reapplying for the same land as in a previously submitted AECS application related to agri-environmental management. However, you can claim payment if you are applying to AECS for a holding, under the same BRN, which has not had any previous AECS applications.

If you are applying for a holding previously applied for, but which now has additional land, you can only claim for the hectareage of the additional land.

Payment is not available if you have had an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) produced for your farm funded through the Farm Advisory Service. This would constitute double funding.

Please refer to the [Claims and Payments page](#) for full details of eligibility criteria and payment rates

Diffuse pollution risk assessment

All applicants (apart from those only applying for organic farming, Upland HIA for deer management, Wildcat friendly predator control) must undertake a diffuse pollution field-based risk assessment - see Diffuse pollution risk assessment section below. Returning applicants should survey for any new issues and also note where any issues were addressed in the previous AECS contract.

Diffuse pollution steading assessment

If you wish to apply for certain options relating to water quality, you must also prepare a diffuse pollution steading assessment – see Diffuse pollution steading assessment section below.

Farm Environment Assessment

The purpose of the assessment is to identify opportunities for beneficial environmental management through a review of the habitats and species on the farm.

The assessment will also highlight any key diffuse pollution risks on the land.

You will need to produce the following documents:

- Farm Environment Map
- Farm Environment Table
- Farm Management Map

To complete the Farm Environment Assessment effectively you will need to identify basic habitat types and produce a Farm Environment Map showing these.

While mapping the habitats you will also need to consider the impact of current management and the needs of the key species present in these habitats, and any key diffuse pollution risks.

This information should then be added to the Farm Environment Table where you can provide more detail about habitat condition.

The process of collecting this information should help you to identify the priorities for management and the best options to apply for, both for the benefit of the habitats and species, and to manage any diffuse pollution risks.

You will need to show your chosen scheme management options and capital items in a Farm Management Map.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify and map the diffuse pollution risks within the general Farm Environment Assessment, or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Assessment.

Some of the management options or capital items you select may also require a specialist management plan which will ask you to go into further detail.

Farm Environment Map

The map should clearly show the following:

- Farm boundary.
- Existing habitats, using the list provided in the Farm Environment Table template. Please note this list currently aligns with the Habitat and Feature Key agreed for the Whole Farm Plan Biodiversity Audit.*
- Boundaries of the following protected places for nature: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation SAC);
- Any historic sites, e.g. Scheduled Monuments. If this makes the map too complex, you may wish to provide a separate map but this must also show the farm boundary.
- Any diffuse pollution risks identified (unless showing them on a separate map). These should be identified on the map as a dot, line or shape as appropriate showing their location together with a number.
- A key to the colour codes used in the map. **The colours you use in the FEA table must match the colours on your map.**

Provide more than one map if necessary to ensure all the information is clear. For example, a map of the inbye fields and a separate map of the moorland.

If you are applying for Moorland Management, you have to provide a detailed map of the extent of the different moorland habitats. As this is provided as a separate moorland map within the Moorland Management Plan, the FEA map can be simplified for the moorland area, as explained in the FEA table template.

The map below is an example Farm Environment Map where the whole farm has been mapped. This would also meet the Biodiversity Audit habitat map standards (see below).



[Farm Environment example map to meet Biodiversity Audit requirements \(PDF, Size: 147.0 kB\)](https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-example-map-to-meet-Biodiversity-Audit-requirements---Jan-2025.pdf)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-example-map-to-meet-Biodiversity-Audit-requirements---Jan-2025.pdf> Farm Environment example map to meet Biodiversity Audit requirements

*Whole Farm Plan - Biodiversity Audit

If you use the approved key and assign a habitat to all land that you are responsible for, excluding seasonal land but including any land that is not currently mapped and does not have a LPID (white space) then your AECS FEA map can form the basis of the Habitat map required to satisfy the minimum standards for a Biodiversity Audit, as part of your business Whole Farm Plan. Please consult the detailed guidance on the Whole Farm Plan page.

Farm Environment Table

You must use the template provided below. The table begins with a short summary paragraph describing the farm. This should include details, such as farm type, size, agricultural activities, livestock numbers and type, crops grown and tenure.

Each habitat present should be described in the separate rows provided in the table. Provide a short description of the habitat and its condition, together with any issues, risks or opportunities. You should note the presence of any species of interest, especially any protected species or **vulnerable priority species**.

Where diffuse pollution risks have been identified, list them in the table using corresponding numbers on the map and give a brief outline of the risk (unless identifying them separately in a separate table). If no diffuse pollution risks have been found, state, 'no diffuse pollution risks identified'.

You can download the template for the table and an example of how to complete it below.



[Farm Environment Table template \(MS Word, Size: 45.1 kB\)](https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/FARM-ENVIRONMENT-TABLE-TEMPLATE--2025-onwards.docx)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/FARM-ENVIRONMENT-TABLE-TEMPLATE--2025-onwards.docx> An editable template for the Farm Environment Table



[Farm Environment Table example \(PDF, Size: 226.1 kB\)](https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Table-Example.pdf)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Table-Example.pdf> An example of how to complete the Farm Environment Table

Farm Management Map

The management map should clearly show where the proposed management options and capital items are to be undertaken on the farm. Please refer to the "Marking your maps" and "Management Map" details on the Mapping page.

Each management activity should be individually labelled with a map letter for identification purposes and shown using a clear coloured map key. These map letters must correspond to the map letters provided in the online application.

For example, **HM1** could be used for existing hedgerow management under the Management or Restoration of Hedgerows option, **HC1** could be used to reflect new hedgerow creation under the Creation of Hedgerows option and **SRG1** could be used for Species-rich Grassland Management.

Associated capital items can have the same map letter to avoid the map becoming cluttered. For example, stock fencing and hedge planting capital items for the same new hedge could be identified by the same map letter.

Similarly, capital items associated with management options can be shown by a line or symbol and have the same map letter. For example, fencing a water margin, as long as the map key clearly identifies the capital items.

The map must include a colour key.

You should provide more than one map if that is necessary to ensure all the information is clear. For example, a large-scale map of the in-bye fields and smaller-scale map of moorland.

You can download an example of a Farm Management Map.



[Farm Management Map \(PDF, Size: 384.9 kB\)](https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Management-Map---December-2015-2.pdf)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Management-Map---December-2015-2.pdf> An example of a Farm Management Map

Diffuse pollution risk assessment

The purpose of this is to carry out a basic assessment of the diffuse pollution risks that may be present on your holding.

This will help to identify the options or actions that may be appropriate to help deal with these risks and where they should be located to maximise their effectiveness.

Field Assessment

To complete the field assessment it will be necessary to walk the fields with a view to identifying any diffuse pollution risks and to look for opportunities to reduce these risks.

Field Map

Using a map of an appropriate scale record as a line, point or shape as appropriate any diffuse pollution risks identified.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify the risks on the Farm Environment Assessment map or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Map, as shown in the example below.

Each of these points must be individually numbered on the map and noted in a corresponding table which will describe the diffuse pollution risk found and what action can be taken to deal with it.

The location of all surface waters such as burns, ditches, ponds and wetlands should also be recorded.

Diffuse pollution risk factors will vary depending on the type of farm (arable or livestock) and on local factors such as, proximity to watercourses, slope of land and soil types, access of livestock to watercourses, location of gateways and tracks etc.

Guidance on factors to consider when carrying out a field diffuse pollution risk assessment can be found in the accompanying guidance for the options such as 'Alternative Watering' and the options for 'Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems'.

[Further guidance on diffuse pollution risk assessments.](#)

Diffuse pollution stabling assessment

The Farm Environment Assessment should help identify key diffuse pollution risk factors from the land.

However where water quality capital items are applied for, a more detailed assessment must be carried out covering any diffuse pollution risks from the stabling.

There is [further guidance](#) on what diffuse pollution risk factors should be considered and how to identify and record them.

The purpose of this exercise is to consider the whole farm, identify potential pollution risks and select the most appropriate options which will help you to manage the risks effectively.

You must complete this if you are applying for any of the following options:

[Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Wetland](#)

[Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Sediment Traps and Bunds](#)

[Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Swales](#)

[Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems – Pond](#)

[Hard Standings for Troughs and Gateways](#)

[Livestock Crossing](#)

[Livestock Tracks](#)

[Managing Steading Drainage and Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems](#)

[Pesticide Handling Facilities](#)

[Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon](#) Note: The Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment is only required where the lagoon will be filled with any water that was collected at a steading.

Note: The completion of a Steading Assessment can be waived if there is no steading present on the holding. However, the applicant must provide a statement as part of the application, explaining that a steading assessment has not been completed because there is not a steading present on the holding.

[Recent changes](#)

Section	Change
Introduction	Slurry Storage removed Improving Public Access removed.
Farm Environment Assessment	Updated Farm Environment example map. Updated Information about Biodiversity Audit. Updated Farm Environment Table template.

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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