Claims and payments

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Making a claim

Claims for payment can be made either by you as the scheme beneficiary or an accountable person acting on your behalf.

This accountable person will need to be mandated on the PF05 - Business mandate form before we can accept a claim from them on your behalf.

Although an accountable person can claim on your behalf, any errors on the claim which may result in us seeking to recover payments or impose a financial penalty will be applied against you as the holder of the contract. So it is in your interests to make sure that any claim submitted is correct.

You can only claim for the items set out in your contract once your work has been completed.

There are three types of claims available depending on whether your contract consists of management options, capital items or, in most cases, a farm environment assessment. Further details on each are provided below.

Farm Environment Assessment

If your application to the scheme requires you to include a Farm Environment Assessment, you will be able to apply for funding to help with the cost of the assessment.

You will be restricted to one claim per management unit during the period of the scheme.

We will only make an exception to that restriction if you have widely separated areas of land, normally at least five miles apart, where further claims can be submitted for a separate Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application.

A claim for funding can be submitted at any time after you have submitted your application for the scheme (see below for a claim form). Payment is not dependent on the success of your application; however, we will only reimburse you where your Farm Environment Assessment is fit for purpose

You can claim the following, depending on the size of the area covered by your assessment:

- for areas up to and including 50 hectares in size, a payment of £200
- for areas greater than 50 hectares and up to and including 200 hectares in size, a payment of £400
- for areas greater than 200 hectares in size, a payment of £600

You can also claim a supplementary payment for the following specialist plans:

- for lowland bog management plans covering 10 hectares which includes two or more sub-plans, a payment of £300
- for moorland management plans covering more than 300 hectares which include two or more sub-plans, a payment of £600. The grazing plan has now been incorporated within the Moorland Management and Grazing Plan template. This section will count as a sub-plan

PF15 - Farm environment assessment claim form - use this form to claim for your Farm Environment Assessment.

Management options

To make a claim for annual management options in your contract you must declare the land on which you undertake these options on the Single Application Form using the Permanent Land Data Sheets (IACS3).

The Single Application Form can be submitted online through registering and logging in to Rural Payments and Services. Using the online service provides benefits such as:

- 24-hour access and an instant receipt
- much of the form is pre-populated
- the system can check for errors in your application
- can save time and expense as there is no need to travel to your local office or post a claim
- gives you up-to-date information on the progress of your claim

If you choose to complete the Single Application Form on paper, it should be submitted to your local area office.

The deadline for the receipt of a Single Application Form is 16 May, 2016.

We will still accept your form up to 25 calendar days after the closing date but will reduce your payments for all schemes covered by the Single Application Form, including this scheme, by one per cent for each working day your form is late during the 25 calendar day period.

We cannot accept your form if we receive it more than 25 calendar days after 16 May, 2016.

If you fail to declare your management options on your Single Application Form you will not receive payment for your management options for the year in question.

You should not assume that because you have a contract that you are under no obligation to claim. Your contract is not a claim for payment.

As this is the first year you can claim Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management options claim on the Single Application Form we are unable to pre-populate any details from your schedule of works.

You should refer to your schedule of works when completing your Single Application Form but you should only claim for work that has been completed.

It is your responsibility to complete the Single Application Form correctly with your management options declared even if you employ an accountable person to act on your behalf.

Capital items

Capital investments are available to support environmental objectives such as fencing, hedges, dyking and habitat creation.

Capital items can be supported on either a standard cost or actual cost basis.

For both, you can only claim for the area / length / quantity actually completed and you cannot exceed the amounts indicated in your contract or exceed what is on the ground. If you or your accountable person claim for work that has not been completed we will consider this as an overclaim and breach penalties may apply.

Any capital expenditure incurred before your application to join the scheme has been submitted will not be eligible for payment.

All capital claims will be paid in full.

You do not need to submit invoices with standard cost items but you do need to submit fully receipted original hard-copy invoices for actual cost items providing the following details:

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- suppliers name and address and VAT registration number if appropriate
- claimant's name and address which should be the business name in the approved contract who is the scheme beneficiary
- detailed description of services provided or goods supplied, separately costed, to include serial numbers for any equipment purchased
- date on which the services or goods were supplied
- total amount due for payment by the customer with the VAT element clearly detailed
- amount paid with details of any discount awarded which fully explains the difference between the amount due and the amount paid
- date paid
- method of payment used
- business stamp or signature of person receiving payment on behalf of the supplier

In addition, when you submit a fully receipted original invoice you must also back it up with other evidence of payment, such as:

- the original cleared cheque
- the original bank or credit card statement
- the original bank giro credit transfer slip
- an accountant's report
- a certified extract from the business accounts

If your invoices are paid by electronic banking we require a copy of the bank statements showing the defrayed expenditure and also copies of the electronic transaction between businesses.

Claims for capital items must be submitted by the end of February of the following calendar year, of the year stipulated in your contract.

So, if you have a claim year of 2016 in your contract, your claim must be submitted during 1 January, 2016 to 28 February, 2017.

The financial amounts in your contract for the year in question cannot be transferred to another financial year.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit your claim by the deadline set-out in this guidance. We will not write to you in advance of the closing date to remind you.

If you submit a claim after that period it will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances which prevented your claim being submitted. If you receive notification that we will not accept a late claim for payment you can contact your area office to discuss.

You will not be able to submit a request to review this decision under the Rural Payments (Appeals) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 as the regulations do not apply in these circumstances.

If you are unable to undertake the work in the year designated in your contract then you must write to us requesting a variation. Please see further guidance in the variation section.

To make a claim for capital items, use form 'PF16 - AECS: capital items claim form'. Guidance on completing the form is also available.

PF16 - AECS: capital items claim form and guidance

Payments

Payments will be made as follows:

- farm environment assessments – these will be paid upon receipt of a completed claim and after it is checked against your application
- management options – these are paid annually in the spring of the year following submission of your Single Application Form. For example, if you submit a claim in 2016, your management payment will be paid in the spring of 2017 once all the inspections for annual management measures have been completed
- capital items – these will be paid upon receipt of a valid claim with any relevant supporting documentation. A valid claim is a claim that is wholly completed and signed and encloses all supporting documentation as required

Payments will only be made once all administrative checks have been carried out on the claim to ensure that the work claimed is suitable, matches what is in your approved contract and that the claim has been completed correctly.

If your claim has been selected for inspection, your claim will only be paid once the inspection has been carried out and the inspection result is satisfactory.

It is a condition of the scheme that you must allow us to inspect your holding to check that the scheme rules are being met.

You can find out more about inspections here

You will receive payment by BACS into your nominated bank account. All payments will be made in sterling. We aim to have your payment into your bank account within 10 days from the date we authorise the payment.

If you change your bank account you must inform us as soon as possible by completing PF03 - Register your bank details – sterling form to avoid payments being issued to your closed account.

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Making a claim: Management options	Addition of information	n/a	As this is the first year you can claim AECS management options claim on the Single Application Form we are unable to pre-populate any details from your schedule of works. You should refer to your schedule of works when completing your Single Application Form but you should only claim for work that has been completed.
Making a claim: Farm Environment Assessment	Clarification regarding the new Moorland Management and Grazing Plan.	• for moorland management plans covering more than 300 hectares which includes two or more sub-plans, a payment of £600	• for moorland management plans covering more than 300 hectares which include two or more sub-plans, a payment of £600. The grazing plan has now been incorporated within the Moorland Management and Grazing Plan template. This section will count as a sub-plan

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