

# Introduction

**This is an old version of the page**

**Date published: 20 January, 2023**

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

Note: The version of this page applicable to the AECS 2021 restricted round can be found in the [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme full guidance archive](#)

## **Background**

The Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) is a competitive scheme that promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's magnificent natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and mitigate and adapt to climate change. AECS also helps to improve public access in rural areas and preserve historic sites.

This funding will help to:

- deliver the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) by supporting appropriate management for vulnerable and iconic species and habitats, strengthening ecological networks, controlling invasive non-native species and enhancing the condition of protected nature sites
- contribute to Scotland's world-leading climate change targets by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and securing carbon stores in peatlands and other organic soils
- meet obligations to improve water quality under the Scotland River Basin Management Plan by reducing diffuse pollution
- control flooding through natural flood risk management
- support organic farming
- preserve the historic environment
- improve public access (*note the Improving Public Access element is not available for 2023 round applicants*)

The scheme is being delivered jointly by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) of the Scottish Government and NatureScot.

## Scheme guidance:

Please ensure you read the [AECS homepage](#) and also the [relevant guidance pages which are listed here](#) .

## Seeking advice

A case officer will be assigned to your project once you have formally submitted your application.

However, if you have any questions or concerns about the scheme before then and you need further clarification, you may find it helpful to contact your local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or NatureScot office.

For applications related to protected areas (SSSIs and European sites\*) you are strongly recommended to make **early** contact with NatureScot, at least a month before the application window closes, to discuss your proposals before you prepare an application.

\*formerly known as Natura sites.

[Rural Payments and Inspections Division contacts](#)

[NatureScot contacts](#)

## Recent changes

Section	Change
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Background

'Note' added to final bullet explaining that the Improving Public Access element is not available for 2023 round applicants

## [Previous versions](#)

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