

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme

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](#) .

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

The [latest AECS news release can be found on gov.scot](#)



The Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) 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.

It also helps to improve public access and preserve historic sites – please see information below in relation to Improving Public Access for the 2023 round.

Full scheme guidance

AECS 2023

The 2023 Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) application round will open for applications on 30 January 2023. A summary is below but it is important that you read the detail for each element you wish to apply for as there are important changes.

Application windows

Slurry stores: 30 January 2023 – 24 March 2023

Improving Public Access (IPA): IPA is suspended for 2023

Organic conversion and maintenance: 30 January 2023 – 7 June 2023

Agri-environment: 30 January 2023 – 7 June 2023

Slurry Storage

Slurry Storage will now be available nationally, with the exception of areas designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. Businesses that currently house livestock on slurry based systems with less than 6 months storage capacity will be eligible to apply. Contracts will be issued **by the end of April 2023** with the anticipation that **work will be carried out** and claimed by 31st March 2024. Applicants should consider this element carefully before applying, as there will be no ability to defer work to another year.

Note: Holding codes with land contiguous to the boundary of designated NVZ areas or have land which is part in / part out of a designated NVZ will not have Slurry Storage listed in the Targeting Tool as an

option that may be eligible to apply for. In these circumstances, the eligibility for Slurry Storage should be checked with the relevant area office before commencing an application.

Organic Conversion/Maintenance

The area caps will be removed for applicants in 2023 for conversion and maintenance. Existing contract holders with land in excess of the caps (on their Schedule of Works in their contract) will have the caps lifted in line with new applicants from the 2024 management year.

Improving Public Access

Will not be opening for applications in 2023.

Agri-environment

To maximise the benefits of the scheme in the face of budgetary pressures, we have reluctantly had to suspend or restrict some elements offered through the AECS 2023 round. As such the following capital items will not be available:

- Restoring Drystone or Flagstone Dykes
- Pond Creation and Restoration for Wildlife
- Muirburn and Heather Cutting
- Primary Treatment of Bracken – Mechanised or Chemical
- Follow up Treatment of Bracken - Mechanised or Chemical

In addition, the Creation of Hedgerows option will be restricted to 500 linear metres per application for 2023 applications.

For clarity, the items/options below remain suspended for the 2023 round.

- Creation of Species Rich Grassland
- Heather Restoration
- Heather Restoration – Follow - up Molinia control

Designated Sites

If you intend to apply for management to benefit a designated site (SSSI or European site) you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot before preparing your application. Also, you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot if you are considering applying for deer management. You should make contact as early as possible and at least a month before the closing date to allow time for a response. The same applies if you require a NatureScot endorsement to allow you to apply for an option outwith its target area

[Full scheme guidance.](#)

Rules and supporting information

[Management options](#)

[Capital items](#)

Also, each management option and capital item page has a link to supporting information which provides recommendations and best practice in relation to the why, where, how and what for each option and capital item. Your application could gain additional points if you follow these.

Please note the AECS pages are currently being updated, where required and will be available in time for the relevant opening dates noted above. A list of the AECS web pages with changes for the 2023 round will be available at that time and applicants should acquaint themselves with the latest guidance before preparing/ submitting an application.

Updated webpages will have a date of November 2022 or later.

[AECS 2023 List of Updates \(MS Word, Size: 57.4 kB\)](#)

AECS 2022

A list of the application results from the 2022 round can be found on the table below:

[AECS 2022 results list \(MS Word, Size: 54.9 kB\)](#)

The Agri-Environment and Slurry Storage elements of the 2022 round opened on Monday 24 January and closed on Friday 29 April 2022 (the deadline for certain Agri-Environment collaborative applications was 31 May 2022 and for stand alone slurry store applications it was 24 June 2022) The Improving Public Access element opened on 28th February 2022 and closed on 29th April 2022.

Note : All 2022 IPA applicants who have their projects approved must secure planning permission (if it is required) by 30 April 2023 in order for a contract to be issued. A short extension to this deadline may be granted in exceptional circumstances. IPA 2022 scheme information for successful applicants can be found on the Improving Public Access page. Any queries about IPA should be sent to IPA@nature.scot

For further AECS updates from previous application rounds, please check our updates page and previous versions of this page.

How to get help and advice:

If you have any questions about this scheme, please get in touch. Contact details for RPID offices can be found in our [Contact us](#) section or find [contact details for NatureScot](#) .

You can also book an appointment at your local RPID office if you need any help to use this guidance, or with the online application system.

Updates

Updated webpages for 2023 will have a date of November 2022 or later.

[AECS 2023 List of Updates \(MS Word, Size: 57.4 kB\)](#)

For further AECS updates from previous application windows, please check our [updates page](#) .

Eligibility

The scheme is open to farmers, groups of farmers and other land managers with land in Scotland, who are registered with us and have a Business Reference Number.

You must be able to demonstrate that you have the legal right to carry out the projects to be funded for the length of the contract and any associated monitoring period.

To maximise environmental outcomes and ensure value for money, support under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is geographically targeted.

This means you will need to check which options are available in your area before applying.

You can check which options and capital items you are eligible to apply for by [entering your Holding Code](#). If you have several holdings, you will need to enter each of these separately.

More information on **eligibility** can be found in the [Eligibility](#) and [Ownership of land](#) sections of the full scheme guidance.

Selection criteria

There are two levels of entry to this scheme. Applications falling into each category will be assessed as follows.

- Level 1 - this is for lower value applications up to an agreed monetary value for the round. This agreed value is dependent on the amount and value of the applications received. Applications for this level will undergo an initial assessment by a case officer including a discussion with

you. The discussion may take place during an on-farm visit, depending on the options you have applied for. Your application is then considered by the Rural Payments and Inspections Division or NatureScot (formally Scottish Natural Heritage) for approval or rejection.

- Level 2 - this is for higher value applications above an agreed monetary value for the round. This agreed value is dependent on the amount and value of the applications received. Applications for this level will undergo an initial assessment as per level one. After assessment the case will be considered by an expert panel constituted on a national basis for approval or rejection.

Applications will be scored against selection criteria.

More information on **selection criteria** can be found in the [How to apply](#), [Application assessment](#) and [Scoring criteria](#) sections of the full scheme guidance.

Applications

To apply to this scheme, you will first need to register with and then log in to Rural Payments and Services.

[Register](#)

To ensure an effective use of scheme funds, you will normally be limited to a single application per year. However, an exception will apply for the management of designated sites, as well as for certain situations where land managers have widely separated areas of land.

More information on **applications** can be found in the following sections of the full scheme guidance:

[How to apply](#)

[What you need to apply](#)

[Designations](#)

[Mapping](#)

[Farm Environment Assessment](#)

[Diffuse pollution risk assessment](#)

[Endorsements](#)

[Funding under this scheme](#)

[Double funding and option incompatibility](#)

Claims

If your application to the scheme is successful, you will be issued with a contract of up to five years setting out the approved work you can claim funding for.

You can submit your claim for the funding set out in the contract on completion of the work. Management options on your contract must be declared on your Single Application Form by the agreed date, on an annual basis, for the duration of your contract.

Capital items are claimed separately on the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme capital claim form and can only be claimed once you have completed the work.

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

More information on **claims** can be found in the [Claims and payments](#) section of the full scheme guidance.

Payments

Management option payments

Payments for management options will be paid annually in the year following submission of your Single Application Form.

For example, if you submit a claim in 2022 payment will be made in 2023.

Capital item payments

Payments for capital items will be made upon receipt of a valid claim with any relevant supporting documentation and following any inspection or administrative checks that may be required.

You will receive payment by BACS into your nominated bank account. All payments will be made in sterling.

More information on **payments** can be found in the [Claims and payments](#) section of the full scheme guidance.

Inspections

If your application to join the scheme is successful, you will be subject to our inspections programme.

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

Inspections to check compliance will be carried out on a percentage of claims, chosen by risk analysis, prior to payment. Inspection visits will be co-ordinated by the relevant organisations to help reduce disruption at your farm or business.

More information on **inspections** can be found in the [Inspections](#) section of this site.

Specific information on **inspections** for [management options and capital items](#) is included on each option or item page.

Breaches and penalties

If we discover that you have not followed the contract terms and conditions, we will call this a breach.

A breach can be identified in a number of different ways for example:

- through the automatic checking we carry out against your applications, claims, your land and allowances
- through an inspection
- following a check of the supporting documentation relating to a claim

More information on breaches and penalties relating to this scheme can be found in the full scheme guidance.

[Breaches and penalties](#)

Further information on why we need to penalise breaches can be found below.

[Disallowance and penalties](#)

Reviews, appeals and complaints

If you are not content with the approval decision relating to your application, you can request that we review the decision.

If you receive a decision to refuse, recover or reduce your payment, you may appeal this decision under the Rural Payments Appeal procedures.

If you are unhappy with our service as a whole, we have a dedicated complaints procedure to help you resolve this.

More information on **reviews**, **appeals** and **complaints** can be found in the following sections:

[Reviews](#)

[Appeals](#)

[Complaints](#)

Contact

If you have any questions about this scheme, please get in touch. Contact details can be found in our Contact us section.

[Contact \(Rural Payments and Inspections Division\)](#)

[Contact \(NatureScot\)](#)

[Scheme delivery](#)

This scheme is delivered through:



[Recent Changes](#)

Section	Change
Whole page	Information added on AECS 2023 round and removal of certain information related to 2021 and 2022 rounds

[Previous versions](#)

[Previous versions of this page](#)