What you need to apply

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When you apply for this scheme, there are a number of things you need to consider:

- what consents and licences you need
- if you need a protected species survey
- if you need to submit quotes for actual cost capital items

If you are applying for the Improving Public Access option, there is a separate application process. You can find out more below.

Consents and licences

When you first think of an idea that you wish to progress through this scheme, and consider that a consent or licence may be required, you should contact the relevant organisation for advice at the earliest opportunity.

Their staff or their websites will provide details on consent / licensing requirements in your specific circumstances and advise on how to proceed.

This should help you minimise any time spent applying for activities which are unlikely to receive consent and therefore funding. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have any necessary authorisation for the work that you wish to carry out.

Some examples of where you might require a particular authorisation include:

- felling licence from Forestry Commission Scotland for removing heavy scrub under the Control of Scrub / Woody Vegetation capital item, or if relevant for tree felling under Improving Public Access
- authorisation from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency if an abstraction from the water environment is required to fill the lagoon under the Water-use Efficiency – Irrigation Lagoon capital item

If your application includes proposals for land in a Site of Special Scientific Interest or Natura site, we will consider any effects on these designated areas. If your application is successful and you are awarded a contract, you will not need any further authorisation from Scottish Natural Heritage.

If you are in any doubt about whether your proposed works will affect a protected species, refer to the guidance on protected species (see below).

If you have already received consent or written approval from a consenting authority you should upload a copy of the relevant documentation to accompany your online application.

You must ensure that you hold any required licence or consent before you start the management for which a licence or consent is required.

You should upload a copy of the relevant documentation as a supporting document to the online system, and make sure that you keep a copy available for inspection.

Protected species

There are several pieces of legislation giving protection to species found in Scotland. In many cases it is an offence to kill or capture animals including birds, or to uproot plants.

The law also protects some wild creatures from disturbance or harassment, or disturbance of their nests or resting places. Examples of commonly encountered species are shown below. Further details can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website .

You should therefore consider whether the management you propose will affect any protected species. You should note the presence of any protected species in your Farm Environment Assessment.

The interactive tools on SNHi may be helpful, over and above your own knowledge of the land and Scottish Natural Heritage area staff can provide further guidance where necessary.

You should organise an ecological survey of the area if you know that your land supports protected species which may be affected by your proposal.

The survey report should include ways to mitigate unavoidable damage or disturbance and suggest ideas to compensate for any losses. The report should also identify any licensing requirements which might allow the work to go ahead in spite of the protected species.

Contact the Scottish Natural Heritage licensing team for more advice on survey requirements and licensing.

Commonly encountered protected species include:

- bats, otters, great crested newts and natterjack toads – these are European Protected Species, protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)
- wild birds protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- red squirrels, pine martens, water voles and other animals – these are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)
- plants listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Quotes

If you require or wish to use actual costs, you must submit written competitive quotations for the actual cost items included in your application to demonstrate that the project costs are reasonable.

If the cost is £10,000 or less a minimum of two written quotations is required. If the cost is more than £10,000, you must submit a minimum of three written quotations

Only in exceptional circumstances is one quotation acceptable and it must meet the criteria set out below.

The below quotations table form must also be completed for all applications with actual cost items, summarising the quotes information.

Any applications with actual cost items not supported by this form will not be progressed past the assessment stage.

Quotations table – example (PDF, Size: 90.2 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Quotations-Table-Example.pdf Example table

Quotations table – blank template (MS Word, Size: 134.6 kB)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Quotations-Table-Template-AECS-April-2015.docx Use this template to record the quotations you have sourced.

You should ask all suppliers to quote on a clear specification so that quotes can be compared on a like-for-like basis. The quotes must refer to this specification. You must provide a copy of the specification with your application.

During the assessment of the application, the case officer will check that the quotes are clear and accurately reflect what is being proposed, and will consider whether the proposed costs are reasonable.

The case officer will be looking for the following basic elements in all quotes supplied:

- quotes are addressed to you, the applicant
- quotes are in written / printed form and clearly originated from a reputable supplier who can deliver the items or work
- supplier's contact / business details are clear and legitimate – on business headed notepaper
- quote is based on the same specifications as described in the application
- no missing elements
- no ineligible elements
- cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
- for larger projects, the quote must include a schedule which must provide a breakdown of costs for each of the main stages of the work
- suppliers should confirm for how long the quote is valid
- whether the price includes appropriate VAT rate. Details of any VAT to be paid should be shown against the relevant items. This is to determine the correct level of grant award

If the application is successful, only the items shown in the quotations table will be included in the contract. It is therefore essential that you include all costs related to the project in your application.

Any costs not included in the total estimated costs on your application will not be eligible for grant. The amount we pay will not exceed maximum amount / total cost per 'item' shown on the contract / schedule of work.

If the quotes supplied are insufficient in any way, the case officer will advise you of this. It is your responsibility to remedy any deficiencies and supply the case officer with the required documentation.

Failure to do so means that the relevant costs will not be considered as part of the application and, in exceptional circumstances, may risk rejection of the whole application at this stage.

If you are VAT registered you should include the lowest cost in your application net of VAT. If you are not VAT registered and have confirmed this during the customer registration process, you may claim the full cost including VAT.

If the application is approved, funding will be based on the lowest quote received, excluding any quotes which are insufficient. You can choose to proceed with a more expensive company, if you wish, but you must be willing to fund the difference yourself.

When entering information about actual costs in your application:

- use wording that clearly describes the work proposed
- for larger projects, you can breakdown the project into separate lines defining key stages, which can be claimed separately once these stages have been completed. There will not be the ability to make interim claims

Exceptions – acceptance of one quote

Subject to case officer's approval, one quote may be admissible when:

1. The specifications are so specialised that only limited suppliers are available and it would be unreasonable or impracticable to find a second or third quote. For example, when the supplier is a contractor required to carry out works in a remote area where only one qualified contractor is available and the scale of works would not attract contractors from further away.

The case officer will still be expected to check value for money against standard rates for similar activities elsewhere, such as those published in the SAC Consulting Farm Management Handbook, whilst taking into account the remote location factor.

2. The individual item value is below £1,000 and you can justify why you have little alternative but to source individual items from a single reputable supplier. You must demonstrate why the work cannot be more easily tendered in larger parts and two or three quotes obtained.

Further preparation

When you apply for this scheme, you should also check:

- any designations on your land
- that you've met all mapping requirements for your land
- that you have conducted a Farm Environment Assessment
- that you have completed a Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment, if needed

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