How to apply for Improving Public Access

This is an old version of the page

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Introduction

Applications for the Improving Public Access item must be made separately from any other applications for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme.

The opening period for applications for Improving Public Access is 20 March, 2017 to 31 May, 2017 inclusive, and applications for the 2017 round cannot be accepted if submitted outside this time period.

You will normally be limited to a single application for any one holding per year.

You may apply for capital works only, and you will need to enter the capital items you wish to apply for.

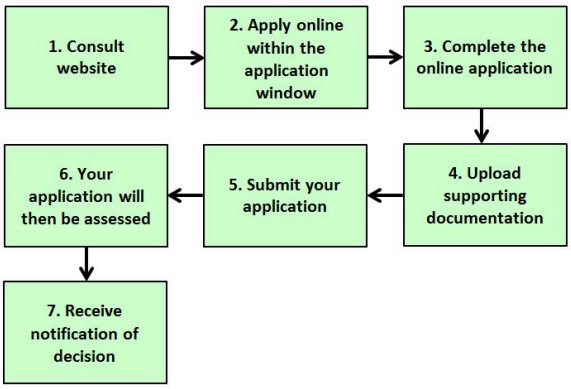
Improving Public Access has a separate assessment process using different criteria to the rest of the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme.

Role of the case officer

When you submit your application, it will be assigned to a case officer in Scottish Natural Heritage. They will manage the application process from the formal submission to the point at which it has been assessed and presented to the relevant individual or group who will determine whether it should be approved, either in whole or in part.

Please refer to the ‘Your application will then be assessed step’ of the application process below.

Application process



1. Consult website

You should first check the relevant sections of this website to get a better understanding of the rules of the scheme, and to check that you will be eligible to apply.

2. Apply on line within the application window

Your application for support under this scheme must be submitted online by registering and logging in to Rural Payments and Services.

You can register for this service here

To make effective use of scheme funds, there will be one call for applications per year.

3. Complete the online application

Once you have logged in to Rural Payments and Services, you will be able to submit an application online.

You can do this by clicking ‘Applications’ from your customer home page and selecting ‘Agri-Environment Climate Scheme’ and ‘Improving Public Access’ from the dropdown list to start a new application.

You will be asked a series of questions about your application.

The application system will prompt you when errors arise during the completion of the application. For example, you will be prompted when information requested at a particular section has not been provided to allow you to progress to the next stage of the application process.

4. Upload supporting documents

Along with the information you complete online you will also need to supply additional documents which must include:

- a map or maps clearly showing the location of the site, the specific location of all the capital items and works you propose to carry out, the sections of path to be improved and where facilities are to be installed
- a map or maps showing the relevant access context – for instance any existing core paths, other local paths, key access / arrival points (e.g. car parks), and long-distance paths, key features of interest, destinations such as a viewpoint, historic feature, loch shores, etc
- a detailed list of the capital works and items proposed – this must include a specification of the lengths and the widths in metres of all proposed paths works, bridges and boardwalks (and the cubic metres of any proposed gabions)
- documents that, as appropriate, describe and explain the benefits which the proposal will bring to path connectivity and other local objectives, and how it will add value for the locality. (Note that as part of the application assessment process the above maps and supporting information will be copied to your local access authority staff for information / verification)
- any consents received from planning or regulatory authorities, where applicable – see consents and licences
- any relevant forms, for example, Contractual Licence, Landlord Declaration Form, Shared Boundary Agreement etc. These documents must be complete, signed and in effect when you submit your application – see Occupancy of Land
- any supporting evidence for the scoring criteria

5. Submit your application

Once you have completed your application successfully, the system will display a summary of the items you have applied for.

A more detailed Schedule of Works will also be available, setting out the proposed claim profile or payment details for capital items as applicable to your application.

If you are satisfied that the summary and Schedule of Works are in order, you will be asked to confirm you have read the declarations and undertakings.

You will then be directed to click ‘Submit application’. An acknowledgment of your application will appear on screen along with your application reference number. This reference number can be used to track the progress of your application.

6. Your application will then be assessed

Rural Payments and Services - © Crown copyright

There are two levels of entry to this Improving Public Access scheme and applications falling into each category will be assessed as follows:

- level one – applications up to £75,000. Applications for this level will undergo an initial assessment by a case officer including a discussion with you which may be made during an on-farm visit depending on the options you have applied for, which is then considered at the local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or Scottish Natural Heritage area office for approval or rejection
- level two – applications above £75,000. Applications for this level will undergo an assessment as per level one. After assessment the case will be forwarded to an expert panel constituted on a national basis for approval or rejection

Scoring criteria

There is a specific set of criteria for applications for Improving Public Access.

Scoring criteria

Criteria for Improving Public Access applications

- connectivity / linkage – assessment of improved connectivity with recognised paths and destinations providing tangible benefits for public outdoor access
- value for money – assessment that the most effective output compared to expenditure can be achieved
- barrier –free provision for shared multi-use of paths – this scheme will aim to provide barrier free, unobstructed access for shared path use by all types of users including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, wheelchairs and pushchairs and this criteria will recognise that some options may deliver wider benefits than others in respect of shared multi-use
- contextual benefits – we will assess the more indirect advantages of the application in enhancing the quality of experience of path users in their surroundings through effective selection and design of routes or where the project combines with other concurrent initiatives to enhance the path surroundings

Assessments will recognise comments from the access authority where the application maps and details are sent for verification and comment, and take into account the authority's comments for or against and any indication if your project will have significant benefits for their area

Additional considerations for Level 2 large-scale applications

Level 2 applications allow for assessment and scoring of benefits from larger and/or multi-partner collaborative schemes in addressing more multiple or strategic objectives:

- active involvement by local organisations in project
- any local consultations that have directly assisted in forming proposals
- additional value-added through partner contributions, expertise etc
- prospects for longer-term value, for example, through volunteer involvement, follow-on projects or educational use
- national / strategic route value

Further details on application assessment can be found below.

Application assessment

7. Notification of decision

Once your application has been assessed you will be notified as to whether or not your application has been approved or rejected. If your application is approved you will then be sent a contract, which you must sign and return to us.

The contract will specify what the funding is to be used for – this will be based on the information supplied in your application.

We expect you to return the signed contract to your case officer within 28 days of the date that the contract was issued. If you do not return the signed contract within 28 days, we will send you a reminder letter.

If you do not return the contract within six weeks of issue then we may cancel your contract.

An Agent, acting as an Accountable Person, can only sign on behalf of a business if they have the mandated authority to do so.

If you are an agent signing a contract on an applicant's business' behalf, the case officer will contact the relevant RPID area office to request confirmation that you have the authority to sign the contract.

Any mandate in place will apply to the office that an agent works from. It does not apply to the agent as an individual.

When the case officer receives the signed contract they will send you a letter confirming receipt. You may only start work when you get that confirmation letter.

You are under no obligation to accept the contract offer. If you decide not to proceed, please tell us and we will cancel the contract. The case officer will formally acknowledge your rejection.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Introduction	We've updated the dates for the next scheme year
Upload supporting documents	Last two points revised to clarify submitting documents

Previous versions

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