How to apply for Improving Public Access

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 .

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Introduction

Important Note: Improving Public Access (IPA) will be reopening for new applications on 1 March 2021 and the guidance will be updated ahead of the reopening. The application round will close on 30 June 2021.

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

The opening period for applications for Improving Public Access is 19 March, 2018 to 31 May, 2018 inclusive.

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 list the capital items applied for.

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

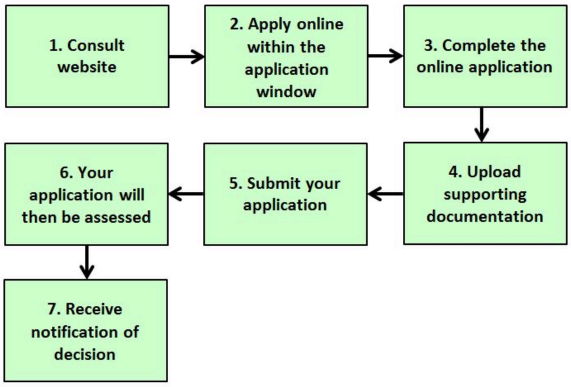
Role of the case officer

When you submit your application, it will be assigned to a case officer in Scottish Natural Heritage. The case officer will manage the application process which includes eligibility checks, scoring assessments and the formal submission for final consideration and a decision.

In successful approved cases they will progress the issuing of the schemes contract.

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

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, all clearly labelled and numbered
- a map or maps showing the relevant local access context – for instance any existing local paths, core paths, right of way, longer distance paths, arrival points (e.g. car parks), any features of points of public interest eg viewpoints, historic feature and loch shores. Ensure you show how these fit with or link to your proposed access improvements
- a detailed itemised list of the capital works and items proposed – this must include lengths and widths in metres of all proposed paths works, bridges and boardwalks (also note these are to be presented in the application as square metres) and for gabion basket retaining walls measurements in cubic metres. Item numbers should correspond with those labelled and numbered on the supporting map(s)
- any documents, such as an access plan, that describe and explain the benefits of the proposal such as connectivity, meeting local objectives, and how it will add value (Note that as part of the application assessment process the maps and supporting information will be copied to your local authority or National Park Authority access staff for information / verification)
- a copy of any planning approval or notification of the requirement for planning permission received from the planning authority. Contact and checks by the applicant with the relevant planning authority must be made; and/or other relevant and applicable regulatory authorities, – 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 additional evidence that shows how the proposal meets 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

Applications 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.

This is then considered at the local Rural Payments and Inspections Division area office or Scottish Natural Heritage area office for approval or rejection.

Scoring criteria

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

Scoring criteria

The key themes are:

- connectivity / linkage – improved connectivity with recognised paths and destinations providing tangible benefits for public outdoor access
- value for money – the most effective output compared to expenditure
- barrier –free provision for shared multi-use of paths – provision of 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
- contextual benefits – the added benefits which enhance and add to the quality of experience for path users through selection and design of routes or where the project combines with other concurrent initiatives to enhance the path surroundings
- additional benefits – involvement of partners, community and the delivery of strategic routes.
- responses from the access authority and any indications of support in meeting local access priorities and objectives; or significant benefits for their area (application maps and details are sent to access authorities for comment)

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 and if you are compliant with any contract conditions or other regulatory requirements such as planning permissions.

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 introduction
Application process	We've updated the guidance for a number of the stages of the application process

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

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