

Scoring criteria for Improving Public Access

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Agri-Environment Climate Scheme scoring criteria – Improving Public Access

This section describes the scoring criteria we will use for assessing applications with Improving Public Access options.

The score sheet template is available separately for download (see below).



[Agri-Environment Climate Scheme score sheet: Improving Public Access \(PDF, Size: 139.4 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/AECS---Score-sheets---Public-Access---170315.pdf>

Connectivity

This about the physical linkage of the paths proposals with other paths and with types of locations.

Your access proposal will score points if it meets one or more of the following requirements:

- should be a core path as designated in the relevant core paths plan
- should link directly to a core path
- should create or upgrade path access to a feature of public interest, for example, a viewpoint, loch shore, along a river bank, to a historic or cultural feature or site
- should create path links to other paths in order to form effective and convenient parts of more extensive local path networks, or of a long-distance path

Access authority response

This is to recognise comments arising from the access authority to which the application map is sent for information, verification and comment.

It will recognise the authority's comments for or against, and indicate if they comment that a project would have particularly significant benefits for their area.

You will score points if depending on the access authorities response.

Value for money

This recognises that differing value can be obtained from expenditure, whatever the total scale and cost of the project, and to ensure that the most effective outputs-per-unit expenditure are generated:

- proportionate and economic level of specification – this will assess and score the extent to which the proposed scale and specifications of the work is appropriate and good value
- distance leverage – this will measure the ratio between the length of path to be created or upgraded, as compared to the length of paths that then become better available for public use. This may for instance recognise new paths which open up a 'missing link' to make a whole route or path circuit useable, or where generally a relatively short stretch of path-work unlocks the convenient use and quality of a much longer stretch of path
- objectives leverage – this will recognise value for money where the path works will generate leveraged benefits for wider local objectives, such as a local community heritage or tourist trail, or a local wildlife project, or a local recreational initiative
- prospective volumes of use – this will assess the anticipated general volumes of use, to favour projects which are likely to be popular for public use compared to routes which may receive only occasional visits

Barrier-free provision for shared multi-use of paths

All schemes will aim to provide barrier-free, unobstructed and good-quality paths as far as possible for shared path use by most or all types of users (i.e. walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, wheelchairs, push-chairs and water users as appropriate).

This criterion is designed to recognise that some options may deliver wider benefits than others in these respects of shared multi-use, through:

- removal or avoidance of existing access barriers and obstacles, like steep gradients, boggy ground, stiles / kissing gates / fences, watercourses, steps
- the extent to which improved or full multi-use for types of users is achieved
- enhanced convenience and assistance for users through appropriate provision of informative signage, suitable seating as resting points, convenient gates and latches, etc

Contextual benefits

This assesses the more indirect advantages of application proposals in enhancing the quality of experience of path users in their surroundings.

This may be through effective selection and design of routes, or where the access project combines with other concurrent initiatives to enhance the path surroundings:

- enhanced availability of landscape views, and / or appreciation of route features such as old walls, hedges, avenues, bridges etc
- opening or enhancing public access within eligible rural areas designated as national scenic areas, designed landscapes, local nature reserves, regional parks, country parks or national parks
- opening or extending public access in association with other Agri-Environment Climate Scheme options or other schemes for enhanced biodiversity, natural interest, environmental management etc within the path corridor

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
- the path is a priority route or link in the National Walking and Cycling Network or other strategic plan, or the path provides improved access to popular visitor destinations, or the path contributes to regional strategies for active travel

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