

**Applying for funding - information for applicants**

## Getting in touch with us

You **must** get in touch with us as early as possible before you submit your Application. We’ll arrange for one of our Project Officers to support you to develop your project and advise on specific application requirements including your spatial data, peat depth and peatland condition survey, peatland restoration and The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015) and, our procurement requirements. You’ll also need to consider any environmental sensitivities and any licences, permissions or consents for your project at an early stage. This includes Permitted Development Rights for peatland restoration schemes, which came into force from 1 April 2021. If you have not already done so, please email peatlandaction@nature.scot and we’ll arrange for one of the team of Project Officers to get in touch with you.

Please visit our [Peatland ACTION website](https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action-project) for further information, guidance notes and templates.

## Timescales for decisions

Once the application round opens, you can submit your application to us at peatlandactiongrant@nature.scot at any time. If you intend to carryout restoration activity before the end of March in any given year, you are advised to submit your application by the end of the previous August, at the latest. This is to allow time for us complete our assessment and decision making in time for you to start your project. The application form for restoration projects can be found on our website at [Peatland ACTION Fund - How to apply](https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action/peatland-action-fund-how-apply).

We are also now welcoming large scale multiyear proposals, for which we will, where appropriate, make multiyear offers. Where possible, we want restoration projects to complete by 31 December in each financial year to avoid the significant impacts of winter weather. Our final date for completion of site-based and non-site based restoration activities is 31 March in each financial year, and these activities must be claimed for by 15 April in each financial year.

Where you have identified a multiyear programme of work you should schedule activity into discrete projects that can be delivered and costed within each financial year (1 April to 31 March). The application form will also ask you to tell us if you have a deadline by which you need a decision to allow you to complete any approved activities within agreed timescales.

Timescales for a decision will vary depending on demand. We will prioritise assessments based on their potential contribution to Peatland ACTION outcomes, timescales for delivery as well as your track record for delivering previous works with our funding, where applicable. Your Funding Officer will tell you when we expect to be in a position to inform you of our decision.

It is important that you complete the application form fully. **If your application does not contain all the information we need to complete our assessment, we may return it to you for revision and re-submission**.

If your application is successful:

* You will not be able to start your project until we have made you a Funding Offer and you have accepted it. We will not make you an Offer until we have received tender documentation confirming the project costs and have finalised our decision.
* We will agree a start date for your project with you. If you do not start the site-based restoration activity within the agreed period, we will discuss the impact of the delay on your ability to deliver the terms of the Funding Offer in the time available. This is important to allow us to more accurately forecast project spend. We reserve the right to reduce or withdraw your Funding Offer.

## The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015) (the Regulations) apply to all peatland restoration projects. All applications must demonstrate that the necessary steps have been taken during the planning and design stages to ensure compliance with the Regulations. Pre-application assignment of key duty holder roles is essential, and letters of appointment must be submitted with your application. If you have not already done so, you must talk to a Project Officer who will assist you with the process. Please email peatlandaction@nature.scot and one of the team will get in touch with you.

Information on the Regulations and the responsibilities for all involved in a restoration project is available on our website at [Peatland restoration and The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015](https://www.nature.scot/doc/peatland-action-restoration-and-construction-design-and-management-regulations-2015).

## Peat depth and peatland condition surveys

A peat depth and peatland condition survey is now needed before restoration work starts. In future, you will need to provide it with your application. If you don’t yet have one, you **must** discuss your plans with a Project Officer who will be able to assist you. Alternatively, if a feasibility study has previously been completed and covers your proposed restoration area you should be able to use that, but please get in touch to confirm whether it is suitable for application purposes. Please email peatlandaction@nature.scot and we’ll arrange for one of the team to get in touch. You must use the [Peat depth and peatland condition survey guidance and recording template](https://www.nature.scot/doc/peatland-action-peat-depth-and-peat-condition-survey-guidance-and-recording-form-guidance) available on our website.

## Applicants, agents and contractors

As the applicant, you will be responsible for delivery of the approved activities within agreed timescales, as per the Terms and Conditions of Funding. If you are unsure about your obligations, we advise you to take professional or legal advice.

### Use of agents

* You may appoint an agent to act on your behalf. We recommend that you have an agreement with your agent setting out the terms of the funding contract you expect them to fulfil on your behalf. However, your agent cannot sign in acceptance of any Funding Offer we make.
* Our funding contract will be with you, and you will be responsible for compliance with the terms and conditions of funding, for a period of up to 10 (ten) years. You will be responsible for making sure any necessary permissions or consents are in place prior to work commencing. You will also be responsible for sending us regular monthly progress reports on time. The schedule for reporting will be outlined in any Funding Offer.
* Our standard process is to make payments in arrears direct to the applicant, via BACS. However, in some cases, you can ask us to make payments direct to your appointed agent. We will provide you with the necessary documentation to allow such payments to be made.
* We cannot pay any VAT that you are able to reclaim from HM Revenue and Customs. If you are not able to reclaim VAT from HM Revenue and Customs, we will pay for irrecoverable VAT and you should include any irrecoverable VAT in your project costs. However, if you are able to reclaim VAT, but your agent is not and you want your agent to receive payments on your behalf, we won’t pay for any irrecoverable VAT incurred by your agent.

### Use of contractors

* Where you appoint a contractor to undertake works on your behalf, you will be responsible for making sure that they are sufficiently competent and qualified to do the work, and that safe working practices are followed. This will be addressed when defining key duty holder roles under The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015).
* It is important that all approved activity is delivered within agreed timescales. Where possible, contractors should be asked to complete works by 31 December in each financial year (1 April to 31 March) to avoid the significant impacts of winter weather. Our final date for completion of site-based restoration activities is 31 March in each financial year (1 April to 31 March) at the latest, unless we agree otherwise in writing. Please note that activities must be delivered in the financial year (1 April to 31 March) in which they are scheduled and claimed for by 15 April in each financial year (1 April to 31 March).
* We recommend that you have an agreement with your contractors setting out the terms of agreement. This is to make sure they are able to complete all approved activity in time to allow you to fulfil the terms of any funding contract.
* We will not make payment direct to contractors.

## Procurement requirements

All applicants **must** demonstrate good procurement practice by inviting open and fair competitive tenders from not less than 3 (three) suitably experienced contractors. Where elements of delivery will be undertaken through sub-contracts, we also expect open and fair competition to be demonstrated. You will need to provide details of the procurement process (including any sub-contracting), including the Statement of Requirements, details of the Invitation To Tender (ITT), all tenders received, the tender evaluation criteria and the evaluation of tenders, for all parts of your project, including any sub-contracting tendering and arrangements. We may arrange for one of our Project Officers to be involved in the tender evaluation process.

The tendering process, confirming project costs, will need to be completed, before we make any Funding Offer to you, and prior to commencing work. Please note that all approved activity must be completed in accordance with the schedule of works and by the project end date stated in any Offer.

If estimates were obtained prior to the formal tender process and the price of the ‘winning’ tender is less than the original estimate, we will reduce our funding accordingly. We prefer to receive fully costed applications to allow the assessment to proceed more quickly. Applications based on estimated costs are likely to be considered a lower priority for assessment.

We are now also welcoming large scale multiyear proposals, for which we will, where appropriate, make multiyear offers. If you are planning to apply for multiyear funding, your procurement process including the Statement of Requirements must make clear that:

* Any contract award is subject to confirmation of funding from Peatland ACTION and multiyear funding is not guaranteed.
* The proposed schedule of works (and costs) must be detailed in each financial year (1 April to 31 March) and works must be delivered in the financial year (1 April to 31 March) in which they are scheduled, and the schedule or works (and costs) cannot be revised without prior approval, in writing, from the Peatland ACTION Funding Officer.
* You must not enter into a formal contract before receiving a formal Funding Offer from us.

When securing the services of a contractor, the applicant should invite competitive tenders, as follows:

* £1,000 and Over – invite a minimum of three (3) Contractors to tender (preferably by electronic means)
* Single Tender Action (i.e. where only one contractor is invited to tender) may be considered in exceptional circumstances, if a full justification is provided (e.g. where geographical location severely restricts the availability of contractors)
* to allow us to reach a wider potential pool of contractors, we encourage the use of the [Public Contracts Scotland](https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/) portal to advertise the contract opportunity
* Applicants must not enter into a formal contract with a contractor prior to receiving and accepting a formal Offer of funding from us.
* Applicants must provide details of all sub-contract tendering and evaluation, and the sub-contracting arrangements including the delivery schedule and costs.

During our assessment of the application, we will check that the tenders are clear and accurately reflect what is being proposed. We will also consider whether the proposed costs are reasonable and appropriate. We will be looking for the following basic elements in all tenders supplied:

* tenders are addressed to you, the applicant or your appointed agent
* tenders are in written or printed form and clearly originate from a reputable contractor who can deliver the goods/services
* the contractor's contact and business details are clear and legitimate - on business headed notepaper
* tenders are based on the same specifications as described in the application
* tenders are fully itemised, with a schedule that provides a breakdown of costs for each of the main stages of the work, with separate cost for each site-based restoration activity, as well as the number of expected machine days
* tenders are compliant with the Statement of Requirements
* there are no missing elements
* there are no ineligible elements
* cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
* tenders should confirm for how long they are valid (6 to 9 months etc)
* all pricing should be net of VAT, with any VAT clearly shown separately
* evidence that the contractor can deliver the work to the required timescales.
* provide details of all sub-contracting arrangements including the delivery schedule and costs.

If the application is successful, your Funding Offer will be based on the ‘winning’ tender (i.e. the one that scores highest overall against the price and quality criteria specified in the Statements of Requirements). It is therefore essential that you include all the costs relating to your project, in your application. Note – the ‘winning’ tender will not always be the lowest cost tender.

Where an applicant plans to do the restoration work on their own land, personally or through their business operations:

* If you plan to carry out the restoration yourself, you must get in touch with us to discuss these procurement requirements. Please email peatlandactiongrant@nature.scot for more information
* Applicants must demonstrate fair and open competition for the works. To do this they must not be involved in the tendering exercise. Instead, this process must be managed by an independent 3rd (third) party such as an agent or Project Officer or Funding Officer, if appropriate.
* We will only accept the applicant as preferred contractor where they are the ‘winning’ tender (i.e. the one that scores highest overall against the price and quality criteria specified in the Statements of Requirements). Note – the ‘winning’ tender will not always be the lowest cost tender.
* A member of the Peatland ACTION team (e.g. a Project Officer) must be involved in the tender evaluation. Please email peatlandactiongrant@nature.scot and we will assign someone to support the process.
* Where the site location suggests limited interest in tendering e.g. a small island location, we may consider Single Tender Action. The applicant will need to provide evidence that reasonable efforts were taken to invite fair and open competitive tenders. In addition, further information will be needed to assess value for money.

## Conditions of funding

As the applicant, you **must** accept our Standard Terms and Conditions of Funding. These are non-negotiable as set out in the Standard Terms and Conditions of Funding, on our website.

In addition, the following mandatory special conditions apply to all Peatland ACTION Fund projects. Please note that we may apply further special conditions depending on the exact nature of your project. You **must** accept all terms and conditions of funding (standard, mandatory and special) before starting any works.

* All information collected in your project will be submitted to NatureScot and made freely available for reuse. The information, including the spatial data, will be used for NatureScot legitimate interests. These include, but are not limited to, reporting on the Peatland ACTION programme outcomes and informing the development of policy and guidance on sustainable management and restoration of peatland. The data will also be shared with research communities (to support the national research programme on climate change mitigation and land use management) and any other party NatureScot considers relevant. The data will be made available for reuse under the Open Government Licence and will be freely available for download from public domains such as SEWeb, NBN Atlas Scotland and Scotland’s Soils. Personal information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and any other relevant legislation, please refer to our [Funding Privacy Notice](https://www.nature.scot/about-naturescot/access-information-and-services/access-information/funding-privacy-notice).
* All work supported by this grant refers to sites described and mapped in your application. Any changes agreed will need to be supported by revised maps and associated spatial data.
* All reports **must** be supported by spatial data submitted in our approved format. All completed site-based restoration activities must be mapped by the end of your project and spatial data complying with our data standards, must be submitted to us with your final report.
* All relevant licences, permissions or consents must be confirmed before work commences and are the responsibility of the applicant. This includes SEPA licences, felling permissions, SSSI consents, local planning authority permissions or any other permissions relating to designated sites, land use or land ownership, where appropriate. You will need to provide evidence prior to starting your project, unless we agree otherwise, in writing.
* Following completion of the capital works paid for by this project you must provide a report on management success and failures of the project five years from the date of your final grant payment. This is to allow us to understand the impact of the restoration work on the site.
* Site improvements **must** be maintained for **10** years from the date of your final grant payment. This includes no muirburn on restoration sites for the period.
* Your Funding Officer will agree a start date for your project with you. If you do not start the approved restoration activity within an agreed period, we reserve the right to reduce or withdraw our Funding Offer. You must inform your Funding Officer when the project starts.
* You must arrange for a site visit from the Peatland ACTION Project Officer before contractors leave the site. This is to make sure that works have been completed to a satisfactory standard. Final claims will not be assessed for payment without an inspection visit, unless we have previously agreed in writing that a visit is not needed.
* You **must** provide a before and after report on completion of the project and before the final payment. This includes a final report as set out in the guidance final report template attached to your Funding Offer. Note we will not assess a final claim for payment without a final report that meets the required standard.
* You must submit monthly progress reports throughout the duration of your project. The schedule for progress reports and claims will be noted in Section 4 of your Funding Offer. We reserve the right to withhold funds if you do not submit progress reports and claims on time. Monthly progress reports should detail:
* Approved activity completed in the period, including a description, mapped restored features/restoration activities, and photos
* Approved activity planned for the next period
* Any issues
* If the project is on track to complete approved activity by the agreed completion date, in each financial year (1 April to 31 March )
* If the project is on track to spend to full budget by the agreed completion date, in each financial year (1 April to 31 March)
* It is important that your project adheres to the agreed delivery schedule outlined in your Funding Offer. The schedule of works (and costs) detailed in each financial year (1 April to 31 March) must be delivered in the financial year (1 April to 31 March) in which they are scheduled. The schedule or works (and costs) cannot be revised without prior approval, in writing, from the Peatland ACTION Funding Officer.
* If a contractor demobilises from site without permission from the Funding Officer, we may not cover the demobilisation costs or any future re-mobilisation costs.
* The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015) apply to all peatland restoration projects. Once the Funding Offer has been accepted and before the project starts, the letter of appointment for the contractor should be completed, filed and must be submitted to your Funding Officer. If there has been more than one contactor working on the restoration project, a copy of The Post Construction Phase Health and Safety file must be submitted to your Funding Officer with the Final Report. Please refer to the guidance note Peatland restoration and the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, on our website.
* Where elements of delivery will be undertaken through sub-contracts, we expect open and fair competition to be demonstrated. Applicants must provide details of all sub-contract tendering and the sub-contracting arrangements including the delivery schedule and costs. Any increase in sub-contracting costs that will impact the total cost of the restoration works must not be agreed without prior approval, in writing, by your Funding Officer. We reserve the right to decline the proposed sub-contract based on quality as well as costs.

## Designations: natural heritage, landscape, historic

Your application must take into account any designated sites that lie within or adjacent to your land.

There are three categories of designations that may impact on an application:

* **Natural heritage designations**: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Natura sites – Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
* **Landscape and recreational designations:** National Scenic Area, Regional Park, Country Park, National Park

You can find details of these designations using [NatureScot Data Services](https://www.nature.scot/information-hub/naturescot-data-services) and specifically our [NatureScot SiteLink](https://sitelink.nature.scot/home) and our [NatureScot SiteLink Map Search](https://sitelink.nature.scot/map). You can also get advice on these designations from your local [NatureScot Office](https://www.nature.scot/about-naturescot/contact-us), or you can get in touch with us at peatlandaction@nature.scot. We recommend you do this as early as possible before you make your application.

* **Historic and archaeological designations:** Scheduled Monuments or archaeological remains (features/sites)

You can get advice on scheduled monuments and the scheduled monument consent process from: [Historic Environment Scotland](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/), Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH Tel: 0131 668 8716 email: HMconsultations@hes.scot. The local planning authority’s archaeology team can advise on archaeological remains (features/sites).

## Spatial data, data standards and monitoring

It is important that we are able to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the Peatland ACTION Fund. To help us do this, you **must** submit spatial data for your restoration project(s) with your application. You must also get in touch with us to confirm your spatial data is suitable for application purposes. Please use the [spatial data templates and guidance](https://www.nature.scot/doc/peatland-action-spatial-data-guidance-support-your-funding-application-and-final-report) provided on our website. Please email peatlandaction@nature.scot and we’ll arrange for one of the team to get in touch with you.

If you don’t have access to GPS or GIS for mapping purposes, we may be able to arrange for one of the Peatland ACTION team to carry out any mapping on your behalf. If you have not already discussed your project(s) with one of our Project Officers, you must get in touch as early as possible before you submit your application.

### Spatial data

We require spatial data to be submitted with your application, and with your final report, as follows:

#### Application stage:

* Site boundaries - area(s) to be restored\*
* Site features to be restored (e.g. drains, gullies and bare peat etc.)
* Location of site-based restoration activities (e.g. installation of dams, re-profiling, bare peat planting, mulching etc.)
* Your access routes.

#### Final report, at the end of the completed project:

* Site boundaries of restored area(s)\*
* Site features that were restored
* Location of site-based restoration activities that were completed.

\*Please use the guidance Site boundaries - what are they and how do I draw them? available on our website.

### Data standards

To manage and share information in a consistent way, we have developed a standard data structure which must be used for submitting your data; this includes GIS projects and spreadsheet templates. All data produced must comply with the following data standards:

* Spatial data must be provided in the format specified by the spatial data templates available on our website (projects for ArcGIS Desktop, ArcGIS Pro and QGIS; shapefiles for other GIS software).
* All data must be provided with full metadata. Please use the geospatial metadata template available on our website.
* If a background map was used to derive (digitise) spatial data, please specify which background map you have used for licensing purposes.

### Monitoring

We are able to consider funding monitoring projects including equipment where it meets the objectives of the Peatland ACTION Monitoring Strategy and funding is not available from other sources. If monitoring projects form part of restoration work please include these in your grant application. If monitoring projects are separate from restoration work please contact peatlandactiondata@nature.scot to discuss with a Data Officer, and do not include in your grant application. The Monitoring Strategy is available from a Data Officer at peatlandactiondata@nature.scot. Please also refer to our Fund eligibility criteria, and our Outcomes and priorities for action guidance on our [Peatland ACTION website](https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action-project).

## Progress reporting and payment of funds

You will need to send us monthly reports about the progress with your approved activities, for the duration of your project. A progress report may or may not include a claim for payment of funds.

Payment of funds will be made in arrears on submission of a completed progress and claim form. A claim for payment comprises a project report about progress with your approved activities, an itemised list of actual spend and copies of itemised receipted invoices. The progress reporting, claims and payment schedules will be discussed and agreed with you as part of any Funding Offer we make.

A request for payment should be submitted to us, based on the dates agreed within the final Funding Offer. Subject to evidence of satisfactory progress and spend, we aim to pay within 10 days of receiving a claim, but if we have any queries on your claim, payment is likely to take longer. We will not make final payment without receiving a completed final report that meets the necessary standards.

We understand that some applicants may experience cash-flow challenges when managing large restoration projects. To ease the burden we will consider interim, more frequent claims to allow us to release funds as soon as possible after expenditure has been incurred. Please contact your Funding Officer if you want to submit interim claims.

In exceptional circumstances we can consider making a proportionate up-front payment where sufficient ‘’evidence of need’’ is demonstrated. Before we can consider a request for an upfront payment as part of our assessment, we need the following information:

* Confirmation of your organisation’s current cash balance
* Cash flow projections for the project duration indicating the amount of cash shortfall for which you require an advance from us
* Your most recent audited accounts (if appropriate). If unavailable, copies of your financial management accounts, for example your cash or account book(s).

## Essential reading

You **must** read all the following guidance about the Peatland ACTION Fund, and note your responsibilities. All Peatland ACTION guidance can be found on our website, including all the guidance notes and templates referred to in this document:

* Peatland ACTION – Frequently asked questions
* Peatland ACTION – Outcomes and priorities for action
* Peatland ACTION – Fund eligibility criteria
* Applying for funding – information for applicants
* Peatland restoration and The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 – information for applicants
* Peat depth and peatland condition survey and recording form guidance
* Spatial data templates and guidance (including Site boundaries - what are they and how do I draw them?)
* Final report template (this specifies the information you must provide at the end when your project is complete)
* NatureScot Standard Terms and Conditions of Funding
* How to acknowledge our support for your project
* Guidance for grant applicants – financial information and records

## Where to get help

Please see the following email addresses to help us better support you with your Peatland ACTION application and delivery of your project, as follows:

* peatlandaction@nature.scot

To get in touch with a local Project Officer to discuss your proposed restoration project or if you are interested in a feasibility study.

* peatlandactiongrant@nature.scot

For all queries relating to your application or delivery of your project. This address is also used to submit your application, for funding offers, progress reports, and claim forms, or to request changes to your project. You can also get advice on procurement for your project.

* peatlandactiondata@nature.scot

For a copy of the Peatland ACTION Monitoring Strategy.

* peatlandactioncomms@nature.scot
* To discuss your project communications materials.

All information, guidance notes and templates referred to in this document can be found on our [Peatland ACTION website](https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action-project).