



Specialist Advice Rules and Procedures

1 Introduction

Businesses may receive up to two specialist advice plans through the Farm Advisory Service. Specialist plans are fully funded up to a maximum of £1,600 per plan (the business must pay the VAT in full).

Specialist Advice allows your business to bring in an expert of your choice to take a deeper look at areas of interest or concern.

Specialist advice is suitable for all types of farm and crofting businesses, regardless of experience and situation. As funding is only available for two options, many businesses like to make their choice after careful consideration or after having received different types of advice like an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP), although this is not essential. Your plan will be tailored to your business.

Specialist advice funding is available for the following topics:

- Animal welfare
- Archaeological and historic advice
- Biodiversity, habitat and landscape management
- Carbon audit action plan
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Crofter's plan
- Business efficiency
- Organics
- Resilience planning
- Soil and nutrient management
- Succession planning
- Water management
- Woodland

PLEASE TAKE TIME TO READ THIS DOCUMENT BEFORE REACHING A DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHEME.

2 Scheme rules and conditions

Eligibility

Any farmer, crofter or crofting township/grazing committee who is registered in Scotland with the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) can apply for a grant. (Holds a Business Reference Number (BRN).

The role of the adviser and your responsibility

A requirement of the scheme is that the specialist adviser is appropriately qualified to deliver this advice. This is defined as the adviser having relevant academic or professional qualifications (for example, membership of relevant chartered association) and at least 4 years of experience delivering advice in this area. To provide evidence of this, a copy of the chosen adviser's curriculum vitae (CV) or a record of appropriate experience gained while working with farmers in the specialist area (including professional accreditation) must be sent to the Farm Advisory Service.

The adviser selected must have no direct connections or involvement in the business under review. The adviser will carry out the specialist advice service no later than 4 months from the date of the offer letter. It is up to you to select your adviser and agree a price for delivering the service. For assistance, please telephone 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot.



It is up to you and your adviser to agree how best to work together but, to get the most out of the service, it is essential that you are fully involved in the review process and that you provide all the information needed to give a full picture of your business. This will allow your adviser to develop a clear understanding of your business, and its opportunities and constraints; and to formulate practical options to improve your performance and achieve your objectives.

It is a mandatory requirement that the participating business and the appointed adviser **formally agree a fixed quote** for the proposed work **prior to any work commencing**. The adviser shall be fully responsible for notifying the client **in advance** of any proposed variation to the originally agreed quote.

Under no circumstances shall increased rates or additional charges be applied to the business **without prior written notification and agreement**.

It is a requirement of the grant that you:

- follow the instructions set out in this document and in the offer letter;
- complete the Feedback and Declaration form (one document) which will be sent to you and forward it to the Farm Advisory Service as soon as the specialist advice service has been completed.

Information handling

The Farm Advisory Service will review the quality of your report prior to issuing it to you. We will always respect your personal privacy and the requirements of the law, in particular the Data Protection Act (DPA), and be in agreement with the Scottish Government's privacy policy.

Further information on how information is managed can be found at <https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/privacy-policy/> or a hard copy can be obtained from your local Scottish Government Area Office.

3 Applying for the grant

Specialist Advice can be applied for on-line at <https://www.fas.scot/specialist-advice> or an application form can be downloaded from the website. To request a hard copy please telephone 0300 323 0161 or send an email to advice@fas.scot. Application forms may be completed electronically or by hand (we can accept electronic signatures). Please complete the application form and email it to advice@fas.scot or send it to Farm Advisory Service, Ricardo Energy & Environment, 2nd Floor, 18 Blythswood Square, Glasgow G2 4BG. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 15 working days from posting the application form, you should inform the service by telephone: 0300 323 0161 or email.

If your application is successful, you will receive a formal offer letter and an acceptance of offer form. When you receive the offer, you must promptly engage a qualified adviser to carry out the special advice service. Once you confirm the appointment of the adviser, complete the relevant information on the acceptance of offer form, and then sign and return one copy of the form to the Farm Advisory Service, including a copy of the adviser's CV or a record of appropriate experience gained while working with farmers in the specialist area (including professional accreditation). This has to be done **within 28 days** of the date of the offer letter, otherwise the offer may be withdrawn. If your application is unsuccessful, you will be notified by letter.

4 Grant payments

Grant assistance towards the cost of the specialist advice service will be paid by the Farm Advisory Service direct to your adviser's company. Once the final copy of your report has been issued by the Farm Advisory Service an automatic request for the grant payment will be made. A Feedback and Declaration form (one document) will be issued alongside the report. You must complete and return it **directly** to the Scottish Farm Advisory Service (see address details in Section 4) as evidence that you will undertake to pay the adviser's company the balance of the service and the total VAT cost. The duplicate invoice you receive from the adviser will detail the cost breakdown and what you will be required to pay.



The Farm Advisory Service will pay the advisers business £1,600* per specialist advice option. You are required to pay the total VAT as it is your business which is receiving the service

**Excluding VAT, except for businesses that are not registered for VAT and will not reclaim the VAT from HM Customs & Excise, in which case the grant will be based on the total cost including VAT.*

5 Adviser claims process

Once the Farm Advisory Service issues the final advisory report to the farmer or crofter, adviser payment will be triggered automatically and will be included in the next 4-weekly pay run. New advisers or those updating bank details will be required to complete and submit a bank details form.

6 Complaints and appeals

If you have a complaint, please contact the Farm Advisory Service and your complaint will be referred to Caroline Wood, the Programme Manager for the One-to-One Service.

Address: Farm Advisory Service, Ricardo Energy & Environment, 2nd Floor, 18 Blythswood Square, Glasgow G2 4BG

Telephone: 0300 323 0161 or

Email: advice@fas.scot

The Farm Advisory Service will make every effort to resolve a complaint quickly and will make at least an initial response within 5 working days. It may be necessary that other relevant parties are contacted to give an account of the matters that are subject to the complaint.

An issues log is maintained to ensure that all complaints and action taken to resolve an issue is tracked this will be reviewed by the Service Director at monthly meetings to identify if additional action should be taken.

If you feel that the Farm Advisory Service did not reach the correct decision in your case, or you do not fully understand the decision, you should contact the Farm Advisory Service for a fuller explanation. If you are not satisfied with the explanation given and wish the decision to be reviewed, you should ask for a review of the decision. A review of the decision will be carried out by a Scottish Government official not involved in the original decision. A request for such a review must be received within 30 calendar days from the date of the original decision letter.