

Specialist Advice Rules and Procedures

1 Introduction

A farm or croft is only entitled to two Specialist Advice Plans in follow-up or conjunction to an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP). Resilience planning and woodland management & conservation specialist advice are the only exemption to this rule. A business can go straight to resilience planning and woodland management & conservation specialist advice without the need for a prior ILMP.

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, which will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible businesses that apply – up to the limit of the available budget. A farm/crofting business is eligible to apply for specialist advice in parallel or following the completion of an Integrated Land Management Plan. Resilience planning and woodland management & conservation specialist advice are the only exemption to this rule. A business can go straight to resilience planning and woodland management & conservation specialist advice without the need for a prior ILMP.

The role of the adviser and your responsibility

While an Integrated Land Management Plan must be completed by an adviser accredited under the Farm Business Adviser Accreditation Scheme for Scotland (FBAASS), there is more flexibility when selecting your adviser to deliver specialist advice.

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 7 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 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 it being issued 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 The application process

Specialist Advice can be applied for on-line at <https://www.fas.scot/application-forms/specialist-advice-form/> or an application form can be downloaded from the website <https://www.fas.scot/specialist-advice/>. To request a hard copy please telephone 0300 323 0161 or send an email (advice@fas.scot). Application forms may be completed electronically or by hand (we can accept electronic signatures). Please complete the application form and email (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 (advice@fas.scot).

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 The grant process

Grant assistance towards the cost of the specialist advice service will be paid by the Farm Advisory Service direct to your adviser's company on evidence that the work has been completed. Therefore, on the **immediate** receipt of the adviser's final report, you must complete the Feedback and Declaration form (one document) 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.



5 Grant rates

The table below details the topics and funding available:

Topic of advice	Funding available	% of overall costs that may be covered*
Farm Business Efficiency	Up to £800	80%
Climate change adaptation and mitigation	Up to £1,000	100%
Soil and nutrient management	Up to £1,000	100%
Biodiversity, habitat and landscape management	Up to £1,000	100%
Woodland management and conservation	Up to £1,000	100%
Water pollution prevention and control	Up to £1,000	100%
Organics	Up to £1,000	100%
Archaeological and historic site advice	Up to £1,000	100%
Animal Welfare	Up to £1,000	100%
Resilience planning	Up to £1,000	100%
Succession planning	Up to £800	80%

**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.*

6 Required action for the adviser claiming the payment

Payment of the grant to the adviser's company will be based on the Farm Advisory Service receiving confirmation that the specialist advice has been completed (receipt of the Feedback and Declaration form) and that the non-grant element of the costs plus the total VAT has or will be paid by the participant. When issuing an invoice to the participant, the adviser should simultaneously complete the claim form, attaching a duplicate of the invoice issued to your client and send it direct to the Farm Advisory Service, Ricardo Energy & Environment, 2nd Floor, 18 Blythswood Square, Glasgow G2 4BG or email (advice@fas.scot). Your business will, on confirmation from the participant that the service has been completed, receive the grant payable under this Scheme.

7 Complaints and Appeals Procedure

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.

