

What is Rural Priorities?

Rural Priorities is part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). It is administered regionally, by 11 Regional Proposal Assessment Committees (RPACs) comprising staff from the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Local Authorities. The 11 RPAC regions have set regional priorities to take account of local conditions. You can view the priorities for your region by clicking on the map at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/srdp/RuralPriorities

Who can apply?

Any individual, business or properly constituted group can apply. Additional eligibility criteria may also apply for specific individual options. Before you are able to apply you must obtain a Business Reference Number (BRN). The Rural Direct Briefing 'Getting a Business Reference Number' will guide you through this process.

What will it fund?

Applications to Rural Priorities can appear quite complex, as applicants must refer to regional priorities and packages, but essentially there are 75 options available covering a wide range of activities. However, it is essential that you check the SRDP website to establish if the option is still open for application. Two options, Community Services & Facilities have been transferred to LEADER and other options have been closed or temporarily suspended. Many of the options are for land managers but those of most interest to rural community groups are:

Option	What it will fund
Support for Renewable Energy - Non Land-Based	Installation of small scale renewable energy capacity
Information & Awareness Raising	Provision of small scale recreation, education and interpretative provision and services
Area Access Management	Creation and upgrading of paths and routes, access facilities and amenities
Management of Archaeological or Historical Sites	Management of one or more archaeological sites for a period of 5 years.
Management and Repair of Vernacular Buildings	Repair and/or development works to conserve and enhance rural buildings that are of traditional character for the area
Development/Creation of Micro-Enterprises	Provision of leisure, recreation and sporting facilities and for upgrading of existing tourism accommodation. Projects involving provision of tourist or residential letting accommodation must not include more than 20 bed spaces.
Enjoyment of Rural Landscapes	Creating and managing attractive viewpoints; screening intrusive structures; restoring existing stone dykes and walls; managing and enhancing single and small groups of trees

Options that fund, for example, habitat management and forestry are also available to communities that manage land such as community woodlands and community owned estates. You can view the different options by clicking on List of Options on the left hand menu of <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/RuralPriorities>

How do I apply?

The scheme is competitive, and has a two stage, online only, application process. The initial stage ends with the submission of a simple Statement of Intent (SOI). Although applicants are now able to bypass the assessment stage of the SOI, community applicants are encouraged to submit SOIs and get Case Officer assessment so that they can get early feedback on the fit of their project with Rural Priorities criteria. In the second stage applicants prepare a detailed Proposal plus an Outcome Plan setting out how they would contribute to one or more regional priorities.

Both stages will be supported by Case Officers who will advise on eligibility, regional priorities, budgetary positions and the need for consents/approvals. They will draw on advice from the relevant public bodies, as required.

Proposals will be accepted throughout the year, with periodic assessment rounds. You can find out how applications are submitted and assessed by selecting "How it Works" from the left hand menu of the website at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/srdp/RuralPriorities

See Rural Direct Briefing 'The Rural Priorities Application Process' for more details of the application process.

Where can I get more information?

The guidance on the Rural Priorities website at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/srdp/RuralPriorities offers potential applicants assistance and information about the application process. However, before preparing your application you may find it useful to contact Rural Direct staff to chat through your proposal.

What's new?

New guidance and amendments to the guidance are added from time to time to the Rural Priorities website. You should check for these regularly in the What's New and Guidance Updates sections of the Rural Priorities website, www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/srdp/RuralPriorities.

What's the difference between LEADER and Rural Priorities?

LEADER is also part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme and is aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. For rural community groups there are potential overlaps between Rural Priorities and LEADER funding. There are also regional variations in both Rural Priorities and LEADER which makes it impossible to draw a definite line between them. However, a project cannot get funding from more than one SRDP funding stream at a time. You will need to decide which programme best fits your project and should seek guidance from Rural Priority Case Officers, Rural Direct and the LEADER Co-ordinators before submitting an application.

You can find further information and LEADER contacts at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/LEADER>.