

ACRES is Ireland's main agri-environment scheme. It pays you for your nature-friendly management of your farm.



How is my payment calculated for commonage?

Result-based payments link the nature quality of the habitats on the commonage to your payment.

A habitat is a place where plants and animals live.

Habitat quality is assessed at the land parcel level by your local Cooperation Project (CP) Team using specifically designed scorecards. These scorecards are the same used to score your private land.

To determine the payment due to shareholders on a commonage parcel, a single score for the commonage parcel is determined.

The better the quality of the habitat, the higher the score awarded.

Who scores the commonage?

Your local CP Team will award marks for various aspects of the habitat which reflect quality, such as, plant species, vegetation structure, wetness, exposed soil, and damaging activities.

Habitats achieve a final score on a scale of 0 (low quality) to 10 (high quality).

In most instances a single scorecard is used to assess each commonage and the payment is calculated by multiplying the payment rate for the score by area.

Where more than one scorecard is used on an individual commonage parcel (such as a parcel with active turbary), then the scores from the scorecards assigned are combined and weighted by area to that parcel which is then used for the payment calculation. As illustrated in the examples given below.

The payment rate for that score is multiplied by the individual shareholders claimed area in a particular commonage parcel to arrive at the payment for that parcel.

Do I have to pay for this assessment?

No, the scoring of commonages will be undertaken at no cost to you.

When is the commonage scored?

Your local CP Team will visit the commonage to score it.

Land in ACRES must be scored in three of the five years of the scheme.

All commonage parcels are scored by your local CP Team in year 1 of ACRES.

Up to 50% of the commonage parcels may be scored again in years 2 and 4 with the remainder having to be scored again in either years 3 and 5.

Your local Cooperation Project (CP) Team will schedule the scoring of commonages.

What happens when the scoring is completed on the commonages?

Once your local CP Team has completed the scoring, the average weighted score for the commonage parcels is calculated by the Department and the resultant payment rate calculated.

This will feed into the overall ACRES payment that you will receive.





What are the payment rates for commonages?

The payment rates for commonage in ACRES are published on the Department website.

Any commonage parcel scoring 4-10 will receive an ACRES payment, ranging from 60 euro/Ha for a score of 4 up to 220 euro/Ha for a score of 10.

What happens if my commonage parcel scores 3?

If the commonage scores 0-3 then you may receive a participation payment of 50 euro/Ha up to a maximum of 20 Ha on any commonages scoring 0-3, depending on the overall commonage areas in your contract.

Why are parcels that score 0-3 only paid a participation payment?

Parcels scoring 0-3 are considered as just meeting the baseline conditionality conditions for other direct payment schemes.

A score of 4 and above is an improvement above baseline and so justifies the payment of an increasing environmental scheme payment.



Commonage Rates* (ACRES General & ACRES Co-operation)

Field Score	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4
Payment Rate per hectare	€220	€180	€145	€115	€90	€70	€60	€0**

* Commonages <10ha with a Commonage Farm Plan receive a flat rate of €120/Ha

** Participation payment set at €50/Ha on the first 20 Ha irrespective of results-based score. The results-based payment rates are inclusive of this participation payment.

Example 1

Payment on parcel *without* turbary

PARCEL 2:

NO turbary

Single scorecard

Area: 100ha

Field score: 8 (80/100)

Payment: $100 \times €145 = €14,500$

$$100 \times €145 = €14,500$$

area in hectares payment rate per hectare total payment for parcel 2

Field Score	8
Payment Rate	€145



Example 2

Payment on parcel *with* turbary

PARCEL 1:

Active turbary

Two scorecards

Area: 100ha

Field score (weighted): 7 (72/100)

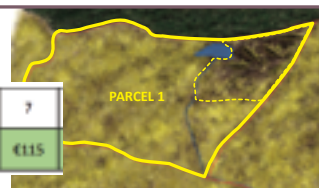
(see below for calculation of weighted score)

Payment: $100 \times €115 = €11,500$

$$100 \times €115 = €11,500$$

area in hectares payment rate per hectare total payment for parcel 1

Field Score	7
Payment Rate	€115



CALCULATION OF WEIGHTED FIELD SCORE FOR PARCEL 1

PROPORTION OF PARCEL(A) X FIELD SCORE(B) = WEIGHTED SCORE(C) (for each area)

	TURBARY AREA	NON-TURBARY AREA
Area	10ha	90ha
Proportion of parcel (A)	0.1	0.9
Score (B)	0	8
Weighted score (C) = A X B	0	7 (72/100)
Total field score for PARCEL 1 = sum of both weighted scores	7 (0 + 7)	

$$A \times B = C$$

$$0.9 \times 8 = 7.2$$

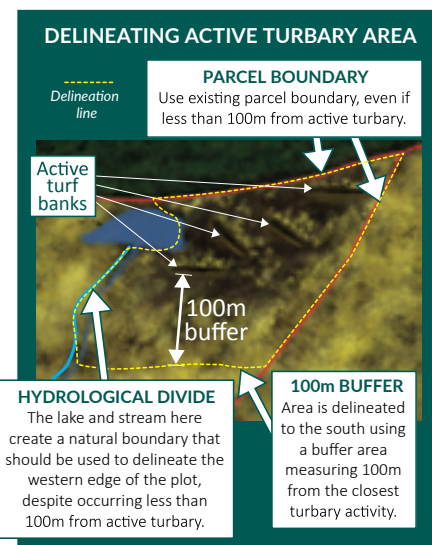
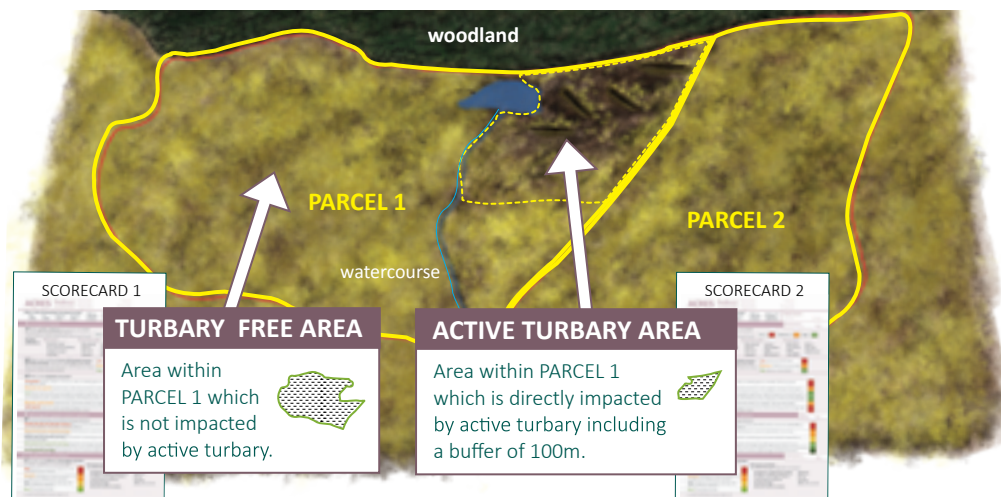
Please note payment will be based on your share of the commonage parcel, and €7,000 is the maximum annual core payment to any individual under your ACRES CP contract.



Below is an illustrated example (fig.1) of two adjacent commonage parcels with delineation of turbary area.

Parcel 1 includes an area of active turbary and is assessed as two distinct areas, with separate scorecards. Guidelines for delineating the boundaries are set out in fig.2 (opposite).

Parcel 2 is not affected by active turbary and is assessed with a single scorecard.



When will I be informed of the commonage scores and linked payments?

When the Department concludes calculation of the average weighted scores and resultant payments, you will be issued with a summary by post of the scoring results and any management advice as regards activities that could be carried out to improve scores.

You are not required to carry out any works but may choose to do so to improve your score and so increase your payment in subsequent years.

What role does the CP Team play?

Your CP Team will hold local meetings with ACRES participants and interested stakeholders to inform farmers and advisers of the results and how they were arrived at.

They will also outline appropriate actions that can be taken to improve overall scores and the resultant payments.

What sort of things lead to a poor score?

A variety of issues can result in negative marking on the scorecard and a resultant poor score, things such as damage from supplementary feeding, inappropriate herbicide use, boundary damage, removal of mature scrub/trees, quarrying, burning, dumping, bare soil/erosion, presence of invasive species such as rhododendron and large proportion of parcels under active turbary.

Active turf cutting (turbary)

Active turf cutting (turbary) has a negative effect on peatland quality. This is due to the direct removal of the peat soil which causes loss of habitat.

Turf cutting also lowers the water level in the surrounding bog which leads to drying out of the surface and reduced habitat quality.

For this reason, active peat cutting gives rise to a low habitat score.

To reduce the impact of turbary areas on the score for entire commonage parcels, the area directly impacted by the turbary (face banks, spread lands, drainage, etc.) including a buffer of 100m where applicable, is assessed separately from the rest of the parcel.





Active Turbary Area

An exception to the 100m buffer rule is applied where there is a distinct hydrological divide between the turbary area and the adjacent commonage (such as a watercourse, road, abrupt change in slope to rocky terrain, etc.).

The application of the buffer ensures:



- the indirect effects of peat cutting on adjacent habitats are captured.
- a practical means of scoring large commonages with a mosaic of peat cutting.
- allows those areas of undamaged bog within large parcels to achieve high scores despite occurring within the same land parcel.

How are individual shareholders supposed to address these issues?

When shareholders are made aware of issues via commonage scoring results, your CP team will host commonage management meetings, to seek agreement from shareholders to address the issues.

Farmers willing to undertake these actions will receive additional support under the landscape action supports.

Do farmers have to carry out management advice?

You are given the choice of continuing current management and any potential damaging activities that may be impacting negatively on scores, or alternatively you may change management to improve score and deliver a higher payment from ACRES.

What are Landscape Actions?

Landscape Actions are larger scale actions that will be of benefit to the local environment. Some examples include invasive species management, encroaching scrub control and water quality protection.

Your local CP team Project Officers will work with you on recommending and applying for Landscape Actions.

Will I get paid for carrying out additional Landscape Actions?

Yes, ACRES participants in the ACRES CP areas will also be able to avail of funding in respect of landscape action supports designed to improve habitat quality, address any threats to water quality and aid peatland restoration.

Who will apply for these landscape action supports?

Your local CP team will identify actions that could be taken in areas, they will assess if shareholders are willing to undertake the proposed actions and if agreement is reached, then your local CP team will make the application on behalf of the ACRES participants concerned.

Will these landscape actions improve scores in subsequent years?

Yes, the landscape actions are designed to address the issues as highlighted in the scorecard as causing a deduction in the score, so carrying out these actions should improve the results-based score achieved on that commonage in subsequent years.

Find out more

Further information, including T&Cs, is available from:

- Your ACRES Farm Advisor
- Your local ACRES CP Team
- the Department's ACRES team
- gov.ie/acres



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

The Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) is co-funded by the European Union and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.