

## Non-Productive Investments Introduction

Non-Productive Investments (NPIs) are actions that are available to the farmer to address environmental issues on the farm, directly contribute to environmental objectives or increase the farmer's capacity to improve field scores through management. NPIs are applied for by the farm advisor in an NPI-Annual Works Plan (AWP) through the GLAM mapping system maintained by the Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM). The NPI actions are screened by the CP Team and either approved or rejected. **Authorisation for approved NPI actions is from the date of issue of the NPI-AWP Approval letter. NPIs must not be undertaken in advance of receiving the approval letter to allow for full screening and pre-approval validations.** DAFM reserves the right to carry out inspections, audits, assessments, research, monitoring, and evaluation at reasonable times for NPIs on lands farmed by participants which can include after the ACRES contracts ends.

The Local Action Plan for each CP region outlines the environmental assets and associated objectives and targets. Funding will be prioritised for actions that contribute to the delivery of those objectives and targets. Where an action applied for, does not address farm-level issues that have been identified in the scorecard assessments and/or does not benefit any Local Action Plan objectives or targets, it may be rejected. Non-Productive Investments differ from Landscape Actions (LAs) in they are generally smaller in scale and are standalone actions on a single farm. A separate document outlining details and requirements for Landscape Actions will be available.

### Funding for NPIs, LAs and Landscape Bonus Payments

- I. The total maximum budget for an ACRES CP participant over the 5-year contract is €52,500 (5x €10,500).
- II. A maximum budget of €7,000 per year is available for ACRES CP Core Payment. 'Core Payment' is the sum of all ACRES CP results-based payments plus ACRES General Action payments.
- III. An additional NPI/LA fund of €17,500 (€3,500 x 5) is available for NPIs/LAs/Landscape Bonus over the 5-years of the contract.
- IV. Where a farmer does not claim up to the maximum €7,000 core payment ceiling in any year of the ACRES contract, the balance of unclaimed funds are added to the total NPI/LA/Landscape Bonus fund for that participant. This ensures that farmers who don't achieve a score of 8, but who were restricted on payments they could receive from ACRES General actions due to the ring-fencing rule (and organic farmers who only receive reduced payment for scores of 8/9/10), will have the ability to get the full €52,500 ACRES payment over the 5-year contract.
- V. Where NPI's are approved, payment will be limited to the remaining fund ceiling for that participant. The total maximum Budget of €52,500 will not be exceeded.
- VI. Maximum ceilings for Registered Farm Partnerships shall be the maximum outlined above multiplied by the number of holdings, up to a maximum of 3.

There are 3 categories of NPIs available to ACRES CP participants.

Section 1 NPI Habitat and Wildlife Support

Section 2 NPI Infrastructure, Section 3 NPI Scrub/Track (Burren/Aran CP Zone only)



\*These NPIs are only available to select on a NPI Annual Works Plan for ACRES CP participants in the Burren Aran CP Zone that are managed by the Burren Aran CP Team.

\*\*Allowable Parcels is an overall summary as guidance only. There will be more specific rules and validations that will apply depending on scorecard type and will be detailed in site suitability for each NPI.

NPIs will not be delivered on the following.

- Intertidal areas
- Saltmarshes
- Marram grass dunes
- Sea cliffs
- Mountain cliffs
- Scree Slopes
- Caves
- Reedbeds
- Permanent natural watercourses
- Juniper Scrub
- Yew woodlands
- Mineral Flushes

NPIs will be extremely restricted within broadleaved woodland, machair, Annex 1 Grassland and Limestone pavement areas.

The area where the NPI is proposed must be free of invasive plant species to avoid disturbance to or spreading of invasive species. Consult with CP Team if there are invasive species present.

Part of the screening process for certain actions will involve notification in advance to the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, if proposed works involves digging and/or ground disturbance and if located within the Zone of Notification of an Archaeological Monument.

**The following general conditions apply to the delivery of all NPIs.**

Biosecurity protocols:

- Vehicles and personnel involved in the delivery of any NPI must take care to prevent the spread of animal diseases, particularly if they are coming from another farm. Footwear should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Plant and Machinery coming from another farm must have their wheels or tracks disinfected.
- Do not import any materials, e.g., hardcore or fill from sites which may be infested with invasive plant species, e.g., Japanese Knotweed.

**Anyone involved in activities in any watercourse** should observe the **'Check, Clean and Dry'** protocol once they leave the river (or lake) and before visiting any waterway again. All wet gear (boots, clothing, and equipment) should be checked for any silt or mud, plant material or animals before being thoroughly cleaned and finally dried. Disinfectant or hot water should be used to clean all equipment, and this should be followed by a minimum 48 hour drying period (preferably longer, up to a week where possible).

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Crayfish\\_leaflet.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Crayfish_leaflet.pdf)

### Health and Safety:

The participating farmer is responsible for the safe delivery and operation of NPIs. They must ensure that potential hazards/ risks are assessed and that appropriate measures are taken to address identified risk.

### Derogations:

Derogations from the specifications in this document can be considered by the CP team. Unless a derogation has been granted in writing from the CP team, the participant must not deviate from the specifications. If the participant or their advisor believe that a derogation is required, they should contact their local Project Officer.

### Duration of Commitment:

Unless otherwise indicated, all actions must be maintained in place until the end of the ACRES contract. Where due to unforeseen circumstances the retention of an action creates undesirable risks, it can be considered for withdrawal and removal by contacting ACRES CP in writing or by emailing [acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie).

### Authorisation of NPI actions:

All proposed actions are screened by the CP team to ensure that they do not pose a risk to the environment. Screening is applied for the proposed specific location only. **Actions can only be delivered/installed for the specific location for which they are approved. Delivery elsewhere is unauthorised and if found on inspection will be rejected and clawback of payment and/or penalties may apply.**

NPIs must not be undertaken in advance of receiving the approval letter to allow for full screening and pre-approval validations. During pre-approval site visits, if NPI action is in place or commenced on the parcel then the NPI action will not be approved. Installation or construction of an investment cannot commence until written approval has been issued to the applicant(s) by DAFM. The commencement of construction or the installation of investment work prior to approval may be deemed as ineligible.

All NPIs must be newly created actions, therefore only NPI's installed or established after the issue of approval will be eligible for payment.

Only deposits/expenditure paid on or after the date of submission of an application are considered eligible expenditure.

Some NPIs may be approved with an approval condition in addition to the NPI specification. These additional approval conditions will be outlined in the NPI-AWP Approval letter and the NPI-AWP Approval summary. Carefully note the conditions of approval in the NPI-AWP, as these must be adhered to when carrying out the action if they are going to remain eligible for payment.

### Double funding

Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil any part of the requirement of an ACRES NPI action.

Entrants in the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) should refer to Appendix 4 showing interaction between NPI actions and OFS, as OFS payments may be foregone where specific NPI actions are claimed on the same parcel to avoid double funding.

The same fence cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement where an applicant has chosen to select two actions in the same parcel or same location and each action incorporates a fencing element. Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs or any other ACRES action that requires a fence cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of any of the following ACRES NPI actions as they all have their own requirement for a fence within that action: NPI Field Margin 3m, NPI Hedge Rejuvenation, NPI Planting New Hedgerows, NPI Planting Traditional Orchard, NPI Planting Trees, NPI Riparian Margin, NPI Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing), NPI Small Woodland 160/300 trees and NPI Wild Bird Cover Strips.

An applicant cannot get paid for more than one of the following Fencing NPI actions along one length **unless they are on either side of a roadway or watercourse**: Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire.

**NPIs cannot be used to fulfil ACRES General Actions or any requirement of an ACRES General Action.**

### Fencing NPIs

**NPI Fencing Barbed Wire, Sheep Wire and Permanent Electric is restricted to existing field boundaries to make them stockproof and manage grazing in that way. Existing field boundaries may include, watercourses, earth banks, drains, hedgerows, stonewalls, treelines, roadways, or a combination of these.**

### Planning Permission

**Fencing in general does not require planning. However, if the proposed new fencing for NPI Fencing Barbed Wire, Sheep Wire or Permanent Electric is in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Special Protection Area (SPA), a National Heritage Area (NHA) a Proposed National Heritage Area (pNHA), or any open upland or coastal (scenic) area that have not been previously fenced or enclosed, then planning permission or a declaration of exemption from the relevant local authority is required. Evidence of planning permission or a declaration of exemption may be requested before approval is issued or at the time of inspection.**

### Conditionality

Any activity that is mandatory under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) and/or Statutory Management Requirements (SMR) requirements cannot be fulfilled using an ACRES NPI action. ACRES NPI actions are in addition to GAEC and/or SMR mandatory requirements. Fencing NPIs or Riparian Margin NPIs cannot be used to satisfy any mandatory requirements on applicable watercourses. Any margin implemented as an NPI must be in addition to any mandatory baselines requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding

e.g. Riparian Margin. Certain holdings are required to exclude bovines from applicable watercourses by fencing 1.5m from top of the bank under SMR2. In this case to be eligible for NPI Riparian Margin 3m, watercourse would need to be fenced 4.5m from top of the bank.

### Eco Scheme

Actions such as tree planting and new hedgerows, that are undertaken as commitments of the ECO scheme, can be located in the same parcel as the equivalent ACRES action. However, they must be placed in separate locations and easily identifiable.

### Completion of Work and Claims for Payment

The claim for payment can only be made online. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan.

A claim for payment can only be submitted once NPIs are completed/established/installed as per specification and by any completion date applicable.

Any unclaimed NPIs from an NPI-AWP are no longer active but can be reapplied for in subsequent application windows. Once a participant receives their NPI- AWP Approval letter, they have until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December the following year to submit their claim for payment.

The following Table 1. outlines certain NPIs that are time sensitive. If the NPI-AWP is approved **(by the issue of NPI-AWP Approval Letter)** on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, it is taken that the applicable NPI will be delivered in that year, unless withdrawn before the date specified below for the action or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, that NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.

**Table 1. Time Sensitive NPIs**

NPI	NPI AWP Approval Date - NPI delivered in the year of approval	NPI AWP Approval Date - NPI delivered in the year following approval	Deadline to withdraw NPI action
NPI Bracken Strimming	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	15th June
NPI Bracken Mechanical	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	15th June
NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th June
NPI Wild Bird Cover Strip	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th June
NPI Winter Stubble	on or before 15 May	after 15 May	30th September

### Geotagged Photos

Geotagged photos may be requested during the duration of the contract to support claims for payment or verify compliance. Area Monitoring System (AMS) may also be used to verify delivery of certain ACRES NPI actions.

### Receipts

Where actions require a new purchase and/or contractor, receipts from suppliers and contractors must be retained by the participant for the duration of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment. A copy of the receipt may be requested for upload or by the Co-operation Project team when certifying the action

for payment. Receipts will have to be made available if requested as part of an inspection. All NPIs must be newly created actions, therefore only NPI's installed or established after the issue of approval will be eligible for payment.

Only deposits/expenditure paid on or after the date of submission of an application are considered eligible expenditure.

#### Certified seed

Certified seed must be used for the establishment of grass margin in NPI Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites on Arable Land and NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot and Strip. All seed labels and receipts for these actions must be retained. Farm-saved seed is not permitted.

#### NPIs interactions with ACRES General Actions

Some NPIs cannot be applied for on LPIS parcels with area-based ACRES General actions and certain linear/point actions.

See [Appendix 5](#) for table outlining what NPIs are allowed in LPIS with ACRES General Actions.