

# GLAS

## *a new Agricultural Grants Scheme promoting Conservation*

*We have produced this 'interpretation' of the information available, largely from the Dept. Of Agriculture's website, on this new farm grants scheme aimed at protecting the environment. It is called GLAS, and replaces AEOS and REPS. This is a LoughAllenBasin.com document for our own use and for use in promoting a conservation project on the rare **Irish Lady's Tresses** (orchid) to Farmers in the Lough Allen area. (Any errors or omissions are ours.)*

### What is GLAS?

**GLAS** is the new agricultural environmental scheme (announced on Jan 16th 2014) designed to enhance traditional agriculture with an emphasis on habitat protection and conservation measures. GLAS stands for 'Green Low carbon Agri-environment Scheme'. From 2015 it will eventually include up to 50,000 farmers with a maximum payment of €5,000. A higher level GLAS+ scheme will add an extra €2,000 giving a total of €7,000 for eligible applicants. **GLAS** will target specific environmental challenges such as biodiversity and water quality. It will be designed to deliver real environmental benefits and will require significant action by farmers on particular environmental challenges.

### Background to the GLAS initiative.

**GLAS** replaces REPS and AEOS (the Agricultural Environment Options Scheme). The list below gives a brief review of these previous schemes:

#### REPS 1 (1994 to 1999)

*Farmers agreed to 11 measures relating to waste management, the protection of wildlife habitats and features of archaeological interest, grassland management and nutrient control.*

#### REPS 2 (1999 – 2003)

*Introduced additional restrictions on waste management and the use of inorganic fertiliser. Problems related to the specifications of REPS 2 being too restrictive and potential payments were too low (REPS payments had not kept up with inflation).*

#### REPS 3 (2004 – 2007)

*Under REPS 3, payments were increased and farmers were required to comply with 11 basic measures, plus two additional biodiversity options (from a list of 16) including... 'Retention of Wildlife areas' and 'Creation of new Habitat'.*

#### REPS 4 (2007 – 2009)

*Objectives were to establish farming practices which reflected the increasing concern for conservation, landscape protection, the protection of wildlife habitats and endangered species, and to produce quality food in an environmentally friendly manner.*

#### AEOS (2010 – 2013)

*Objectives of AEOS were to meet the challenges of conserving and promoting biodiversity, improving water management/quality, and reducing the farming impact on climate change. It finished taking applications in 2013 and the new scheme, **GLAS**, will start in 2015.*

### When does the new GLAS initiative come into force?

GLAS comes into force in 2015, dates are not announced yet.

### What are the aims of GLAS?

The aims are to restore, preserve and enhance ecosystems; to promote resource efficiency and support the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. Also to encourage knowledge transfer and innovation.

## How long does GLAS last?

The proposed minimum contract under GLAS will be 5 years.

## Who can apply?

Only farmers who comply with the Core management requirements can apply for GLAS. But priority will be given to those farmers whose land is important for particular rare species of plant or animal, or who are involved in upland conservation, or undertake fencing off of watercourses. Some 13,000 farmers who were not accepted into AEOS in 2013 and are currently not in any plan, can apply to be included in GLAS when it comes on stream in 2015. Farmers who are just finishing their REPS 4 plan (in 2014 or 2015) can apply to transfer to the new GLAS initiative, as can farmers who finish up an AEOS plan in 2015 or in later years

## What are the Core Requirements?

As with the earlier agri-environment schemes, all actions attracting a payment must go beyond the baseline required for the EU Single Payment Scheme. In a change from AEOS, **GLAS** is expected to have four core requirements which all participants must meet. These ensure that farmers have an enhanced level of environmental awareness evidenced by record keeping of actions delivered, and underpinned by a plan for nutrient efficiency on their holding. The four Core requirements are that...

- a) *The application is made by a consultant/planner approved by the **Farm Advisory Service**,*
- b) *The whole farm must operate to a nutrient management plan,*
- c) *There must be training courses on good environmental practices, and*
- d) *Records of actions taken must be kept.*

## What are the Entry requirements?

There are two 'tiers' for entry. Tier 1 gives preference to farmers who choose at least one action from a **Priority list**. Once places under Tier 1 have been filled, and if there is capacity, a selection process will be used to allow other farmers who have chosen actions from the **General list** to join the Scheme.

## What are the Priority requirements?

In **GLAS**, it is proposed that priority will be given to all farmers committing to at least one of a list of priority actions. These Tier 1 priorities are:

1. *Farmland Habitat Conservation.*
2. *Conservation of Bird species (e.g. Curlew).*
3. *Uplands Conservation (commonages only).*
4. *Fencing of Watercourses (where fields are in grass).*
5. *Buffer zones along all watercourses where fields are in tillage.*

Importantly, if any of the five above actions apply to a farm then the applicant must choose them. If none of those actions apply to a farm then the applicant can choose one of the remaining actions and will then have priority access. These remaining actions are:

6. *Low emission slurry spreading.*
7. *Minimum tillage.*
8. *Green cover from a sown crop.*
9. *Wild bird or flower cover on grassland.*

## General requirements?

Farms not suitable for any of the above Priority actions, may apply by selecting from a Tier 2 list of general actions but they will not have priority access into the scheme. In addition these general actions can be used by all farmers to broaden out a plan and so as to maximise payments. The list includes:

1. *Low input pasture/traditional hay meadow.*
2. *Riparian margins.*
3. *Coppicing/laying hedgerow, Stone wall maintenance, Tree planting*
4. *Enlarged headlands, Cultivation of tramlines, Fallow land, Arable margins, Rare breeds, bird, bee and bat boxes.*

## Other actions to achieve maximum payment

Farmers can choose additional actions from the Priority or General list to bring their payments up to the maximum of €5,000.

## Targeting/Selection Criteria

It's not definite what the selection or targeting criteria will be, but the Department of Agriculture suggests that it could include farms with high status water quality sites, conservation habitats with poor or bad status, specific species under immediate threat, and intensive farmers with grassland stocking rate of >140kg organic N per hectare and tillage farmers with more than 30 ha. of arable crops. (One suckler cow with calf produces c.90kg. organic Nitrogen in manure per annum per hectare.)

## How to apply for GLAS?

Applications are through the local Farm Advisory Service agricultural planner, and must comply with the regulations of nutrient management and training in environmental practices.

## When will it start?

No application dates have yet been given as **GLAS** has only just been announced. But as the scheme is expected to roll out in 2015 early preparation might be advisable. Many farmers missed out on the last AEOS scheme; others will be finishing the old REPS schemes next year and all of these will probably apply for the new GLAS initiative.

## What conservation measures are covered in GLAS?

Protection of certain threatened species, protection of breeding sites or important areas for certain threatened bird species (e.g. Lapwing and Curlew) are examples of conservation work that may be backed by GLAS. A strong case could be made for specific rare plants which occur on your land — such as Irish Lady's Tresses. This could be included under the criteria of specific species under immediate threat, or conservation habitats with poor or bad status!

## Is there additional data needed for specific measures?

Yes! If applying for GLAS under the Priority status, you would need to have specific information about the actions you plan to take. For example, the species or habitats being conserved, where it occurs on your land, what measures you are going to take, what the aims of this conservation measure would be and how you would record this. The **conservation of Irish Lady's Tresses** could be a part of this Priority plan.

## What does it Pay?

Standard grant for selected farms is up to €5000

## What is GLAS+ (GLAS Plus)?

**GLAS+** allows for a payment of up to €2,000 (on top of the GLAS €5,000 maximum grant) for a limited number of farmers who take on particularly challenging actions delivering an exceptional level of environmental benefit. We believe that a case could be made for an additional GLAS+ payment for Irish Lady's Tresses conservation and protection.

David and Frances Farrell, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.  
086 3900731 / 086 8162447

[www.LoughAllenBasin.com](http://www.LoughAllenBasin.com)

## Further information:

Farmers Journal Report: [www.farmersjournal.ie/glas-scheme-to-be-the-new-reps-for-50-000-irish-farmers-153612/](http://www.farmersjournal.ie/glas-scheme-to-be-the-new-reps-for-50-000-irish-farmers-153612/)

Dept of Agriculture: [www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/press/pressreleases/2014/DraftConsultation%20DocRDP14%20Jan.pdf](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/press/pressreleases/2014/DraftConsultation%20DocRDP14%20Jan.pdf)

Agriland: [www.agriland.ie/news/glas-how-will-it-work/](http://www.agriland.ie/news/glas-how-will-it-work/)