



Grants & Regulations news

Protecting, expanding and improving England's woodlands

In this month's eAlert, read the guidance on meeting grant payment scheme requirements during the prolonged period of hot and dry weather, find out about eligibility changes for the Woodland Carbon Fund, and access the new guidance for afforestation proposed on or near nationally important upland breeding wader areas.

Hot and dry weather conditions in England

The prolonged hot and dry weather conditions in England have been causing difficulties for some landowners in meeting requirements of their rural grant and payment schemes. [Guidance on how to deal with any difficulties](#) arising from the unusual weather relating to BPS, ES, CS and legacy woodland schemes has been published on GOV.UK.

We are aware that some newly planted trees are dying due to the unusual weather. Whilst some losses are expected even in normal years (even with the best planting and management, a proportion of trees will not survive the first years of planting and should be replaced as routine by 'beating up'), there may be some sites where exceptional losses are experienced. In many cases, it will not be possible to assess the extent of the effect of the unusual weather until beat up surveys take place in the autumn.

The Forestry Commission is exploring how best to support CS, legacy (WGS, EWGS, FWPS, FWP) and Woodland Carbon Fund agreement holders where their new or established woodlands have been, or are at risk of being, significantly impacted.

Q. Who do I contact?

In the first instance, if you have concerns that you may not be able to meet the requirements of your woodland grant agreement due to the prolonged hot and dry weather conditions and want advice about your options, please contact the relevant grant administrator as soon as possible (details below). They will be able to give you

advice about what you need to do, depending on the extent of any damage. If calling, please have your agreement number or reference to hand and if writing or emailing, please include it in your message.

- For legacy woodland schemes, the relevant grant administrator is your [FC Admin Hub](#).
- For CS schemes, the relevant grant administrator is [Countryside Stewardship Delivery Services](#).
- For the Woodland Carbon Fund, the relevant grant administrator is [FC National Office](#).

Q. What if I think I need to claim ‘force majeure’?

If you believe that the damage to your woodland caused by the unusual weather is serious enough to require changes to your agreement, because you will not be able to meet the agreement’s requirements, this may be considered as ‘force majeure’. You should consult the relevant clause in the terms and conditions of your agreement and must notify the relevant grant administrator in writing (details above) within either 10 or 15 working days of the event (for example a wildfire) or once you are in a position to assess that you will not be able to meet the conditions of your agreement:

- For FWPS or WGS schemes, you must claim ‘force majeure’ within 10 working days.
- For FWP, EWGS, CS or WCF schemes, you must claim ‘force majeure’ within 15 working days.

We appreciate that it may not be possible to know the extent or significance of damage until later in the year. If you are unsure, please contact the relevant grant administrator or your FC Woodland Officer for advice as soon as possible.

Woodland Carbon Fund Eligibility

A proportion of the Woodland Carbon Fund is now open to applications from public bodies such as the Ministry of Defence, Forest Enterprise and Crown Estates.

Up to 40% of the remaining fund will be made available to public bodies for a limited period of 12 months, the remaining 60% will be available for applications from private land owners.

Extending the eligibility for the fund will further support the creation of large scale, productive woodland that increases carbon storage but also delivers wider benefits. For further information and to apply please [visit this page](#) or email

wcf@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

New guidance available for afforestation proposed on or near nationally important upland breeding wader areas

The government stated in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) that as well as creating lots more woodland, priority will also be given to species in England that are threatened either globally or in the UK, or those that are internationally significant (the selected waders meet this criteria).

[This guidance](#) has been jointly produced by the Forestry Commission and Natural England to help ensure that proposals for afforestation identify and avoid important breeding wader sites i.e. those sites that are capable of supporting breeding waders and where breeding waders are present. The note brings together current knowledge on the habitats used by these species and is provided to aid early screening of site suitability.

The purpose of the guidance is not only to help applicants identify (and avoid) important breeding sites but also, through a series of simple steps, identify sites that are not likely to be of importance for waders and where there are opportunities for considering afforestation.

If you have any questions, please contact us:

Email: GRNationalTeam@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-grants>

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