



Grants & Regulations news

Protecting, expanding and improving England's woodlands

This month, keep up-to-date on further funding for the HS2 Woodland Fund, and changes to eligibility for the Woodland Creation Planning Grant and Woodland Carbon Fund. We have also refreshed the application forms for Woodland Carbon fund. The Felling Licence Online service has some downtime for improvements and agents can now request CS HT packs.

The HS2 Woodland Fund is back!

Access funding to create native woodland or restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) within 25 miles of the HS2 phase one route

On the 11 March the HS2 Woodland Fund will open for applications. This time last year we launched the HS2 Woodland Fund (HS2WF), open to private landowners and local authorities within 25 miles of the HS2 phase one route from London to the West Midlands. We can happily announce that we have a further £4 million of funding to commit to projects over the next 4 years.

The grant funds the creation of new native woodland between 1 and 25 hectares, especially where it connects or expands existing woodland to benefit habitat resilience. The grant also funds the removal of exotic species and restoration of native tree species on Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites. Your application can include one or both types of activity.

If you have an application on our Reserve List already, we will contact you to confirm that you still want your application to be considered for HS2WF funding. If you sent us an expression of interest last year, we will be sending you a blank 2019 application form.

Look out for more details when we open on 11 March. Information and forms will be updated on our [HS2 Woodland Fund webpage](#) in early March and you can find out more by registering to join our customer webinar below.

**HS2 Woodland Fund customer
webinar**



[Register here](#) to join us for an overview of the HS2 Woodland Fund:

Wednesday 13 March at 11:00am

Changes to Woodland Creation Planning Grant and Woodland Carbon Fund eligibility

Do you have a woodland creation proposal in mind that could now be eligible for funding through WCPG or WCF?

We have made some changes to the [Woodland Creation Planning Grant](#) (WCPG) and [Woodland Carbon Fund](#) (WCF) that will make more project proposers eligible for funding:

- public bodies (other than Forest Enterprise) are now eligible to apply to WCPG for funding to produce a UKFS-compliant woodland creation design plan
- the WCF second stage payment (made in year 5) of £1,000 per hectare is now available to Local Authorities and public bodies (other than Forest Enterprise)
- the productive species eligibility requirement for WCPG and WCF may be reduced, from a minimum of 70% productive species within the proposed planted areas to a minimum of 50%, on an individual case basis and at the Forestry Commission's sole discretion. This will only be applied where we are satisfied that it is necessary due to site constraints, and that the main objective of a proposal remains productive woodland
- EU State Aid 'de minimis' rules now no longer apply to WCPG, or to infrastructure payments for forest roads and tracks in WCF. This means that there is no restriction on an eligible applicant's grant funding income

We have also clarified that all stands of new planting in a WCF application must be no more than 50 meters from either existing woodland, or else from other stands in the application, in order to be considered part of a contiguous block counting towards minimum block sizes, where the objective clearly remains to establish productive woodland.

Are you now eligible for WCPG or WCF?

The available funding for both of these grants is finite, so if you have a woodland creation proposal for 10 hectares or more in mind, get in touch with your local Woodland Officer or send enquiries to wcp@forestrycommission.gov.uk or wcf@forestrycommission.gov.uk in good time. All Woodland Carbon Fund claims (other than second stage payments) must be submitted by Agreement Holders no later than 31 March 2021.

Refreshed application forms for the Woodland Carbon Fund

It's now even easier to calculate and tell us the total amount of funding you're applying for through the Woodland Carbon Fund.

The [Woodland Carbon Fund](#) (WCF) is open all year for applications. From now on, a WCF grant calculator must be submitted with every application form, to enable us to more easily process applications. Now, instead of completing a table within the PDF application form, we are asking you put the same information into a very simple spreadsheet that will automatically calculate the available grant.

Remember, a WCF application form and grant calculator must be accompanied by either: a completed WCPG Stage 1 checklist, a draft or complete UKFS-compliant Woodland Creation Design Plan, or confirmation that the Forestry Commission has given an EIA screening decision that your proposal does not need consent, or has consent if it was required. Applications submitted without one of these will be rejected.

If you want to go via the standalone EIA enquiry route – straight to a final funding decision – you must submit a standalone EIA afforestation enquiry form to your local Forest Services Area team and receive their opinion before you apply to the Woodland Carbon Fund.

Alternatively, you may find that applying to the Woodland Creation Planning Grant is a useful first step, which will then allow you to make an application to the Woodland Carbon Fund for an 'in principle' funding decision once you complete WCPG Stage 1.

Limited funding remains for Woodland Carbon Fund schemes in 2019/20

The Woodland Carbon Fund has recently seen an increase in uptake, with limited funding remaining for claims in 2019/20. The fund remains open for applications but planting may need to be deferred until 2020/21.

Felling Licence Online downtime

Felling Licence Online will be unavailable on Friday 1 March from 8:00am to midday as we are updating the service to include a new Search page.

The Search page will help users find a Felling Licence Application based on different search criteria:

- application reference number
- property name
- ordnance Survey (OS) grid ref

- Local Authority

Two new dates fields will also be added to the Operations screen, meaning an applicant can enter a proposed start and end date for the planned felling operations. Our [Felling Licence Online: user guide operations note 45](#) has been updated to help with these changes (section 12 has been added to cover the Search function and section 7 shows the date fields).

We apologise for any inconvenience resulting from the downtime. Future notifications regarding downtime will be added to the [Apply Online for a Felling Licence](#) GOV.UK page.

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Woodland Improvement

Applicants can now request packs

Agents are now able to request packs on behalf of the main contact for the SBI. If you have been unable to request an application pack as you are not the main contact for the SBI, as long as you are associated with the business in Rural Payments and have the correct permission level you will now be able to do so. The minimum permission level is CS View under the Countryside Stewardship (applications) permission. For information on how to get set up on the Rural Payments service have a look at the guide on page 4 in [RPA's winter update](#).

Higher Tier application packs will start to be sent out from Monday 4 March. Each application pack will include application Annex 1 (for agri-environment land) and Annex 2 for woodland. You only need to complete annex 2 if you are applying for options CS on your woodland. Each annex will be populated with information on the land parcels on the holding and you can ignore those that you are not apply for grant on.

Application Packs must be requested by 31 March and applications need to be submitted by 3 May so please get in touch with Defra Rural services to request yours today.

email: ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk

telephone: 03000 200 301

Please go to the [Woodland Support page](#) for a link to the Countryside Stewardship: Higher Tier manual

Join our customer webinar

If you would like to find out more then please register to join our webinar.

Higher Tier application process for woodlands customer webinar:

Thursday 7 March 2019

12:00 - 1:00pm

[Please register to attend](#)

Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant Agreements

Have you sent in your claim?

Last week we wrote to Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant agreement holders to remind them of the deadlines to complete the work and make their claims. We only wrote to you if you do not appear to have claimed for all of your capital works had an agreement with a deadline to complete work before next planting season.

Please note these letters included the Countryside Stewardship contract ID rather than the CS Application ID. While this is a five digit number these references and the content of the letter relates to CS agreements not any Farm Woodland Premium Scheme agreement you may already have.

If you have any questions, please contact us:

Email:
GRNationalTeam@forestrycommission.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/forestrycommission>

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