

HS2 Woodland Fund (HS2WF) Grant Manual

Purpose

This Grant Manual presents the guidance to applicants for the HS2 Woodland Fund.

Change log

Version	Publication Date	Key Changes
1.0	30/05/2023	First version.
1.1	01/07/2023	Updated to include the biosecure procurement requirement.

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1 Introduction

This Grant Manual explains how the HS2 Woodland Fund (HS2WF) works and what you need to do to apply. It also explains the requirements and processes that you must follow if your application is successful.

1.1 The HS2 Woodland Fund

You can apply for funding to support native woodland creation or the restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) within a 25-mile zone surrounding the HS2 route - currently in Phase One, from London to the West Midlands. See the [HS2WF map](#) (PDF, 239 KB, 1 page).

The HS2 Woodland Fund (HS2WF) opened on a 'first come, first served' basis in February 2018, with an initial budget of £1 million. A further £4 million budget was made available to be allocated to projects until 2024/25.

From May 2023 new applications for HS2 funding for woodland creation will be delivered via the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO). The England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) was opened in June 2021. The offer for PAWS restoration has also been reviewed and where necessary payment rates for standard cost items updated.

This manual is specific to the application and agreement management process for the PAWS restoration element of the HS2 Woodland Fund. For more information on EWCO click [here](#).

1.2 Customer and Land registration

To apply to the HS2 Woodland Fund for PAWS restoration you do not need to be registered on [Rural Payments](#) and have a Single Business Identifier (SBI), however if you are registered you will need to provide your SBI on the application form.

1.3 Important information

HS2WF PAWS Restoration is provided under domestic legislation. You may need to keep evidence and provide it when requested. Check [Section 7.4](#) for evidence and record-keeping requirements before you apply.

The Forestry Commission reserves the right to:

- Not award grant funding for some or all the activities for which applications are invited.
- Amend add or withdraw the elements of the HS2WF at any time. Where any such changes affect a current application, the applicant will be notified of the change and how it affects their application.

1.4 Disclaimer

The Forestry Commission makes every effort to ensure this Grant Manual and associated Application Forms are accurate. However, neither the Forestry Commission nor its respective advisers, officers, delivery partners, employees, other staff or agents:

- Makes any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of this documentation.
- Accepts any responsibility for the information contained in the documentation or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information, nor shall any of them be liable for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

1.5 Guarding against fraud

Fraudsters may target land managers who receive grant payments, and we are aware that in the past some customers have received emails, texts and telephone calls claiming to be from the Forestry Commission, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) or Defra.

Remember:

- Never discuss your bank account details with someone you do not know
- We will not ask you to make a payment over the phone
- Delete any emails or texts you do not believe are genuine, and do not open any links. Our main email addresses are:
 - hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk
 - ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk
 - RPA@notifications.service.gov.uk
- Be cautious about what information you share externally, particularly on social media

If you suspect an attempted fraud or feel you have been the subject of fraud, you can contact:

- [Action Fraud](#) (the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime) online or on 0300 123 2040
- If the attempt relates to information held by the RPA or claimed to be from the RPA contact the RPA's Fraud Referral Team on 0800 347 347 or FraudInConfidence@rpa.gov.uk

We apply controls to guard against fraud and monitor all financial transactions for potential instances of fraud, and any circumstances where we believe there could be an attempt to obtain grant funds by deception will be fully investigated.

2 Overview

The HS2 Woodland Fund is open year-round but PAWS restoration applications will be assessed four times per year. You will have one planting season available to complete your project. Table 1 below shows the application deadlines for 2023/24.

Table 1

Application deadline	All agreements issued by	Available planting seasons if your application is assessed following this deadline
Friday 30 June 2023	Late October 2023	Winter 2023-24
Friday 29 September 2023	Late February 2024	Winter 2024-25
Friday 15 December 2023	Late May 2024	Winter 2024-25
Friday 29 March 2024	Late July 2024	Winter 2024-25

Please note that it could take up to five months from the point of us receiving a valid and complete application to an Agreement being offered.

Before applying to the HS2WF for PAWS restoration a UKFS-compliant, Forestry Commission approved **Woodland Management Plan** (WMP) must be in place before an agreement is offered. The WMP must have been approved in principle by the Woodland Officer before the application is submitted. All felling permissions must be in place before an agreement is offered.

There are thresholds for PAWS Restoration that must be met:

- Application value: No lower or upper limit.
- Minimum application size: 0.5ha. Minimum felling coupe size 0.1ha. No Maximum application area. 0.1 - 2ha for individual felling coupes.
- Stocking density: 1,100 – 2,500 (where there's existing natural native broadleaf regeneration, you must plant to enrich this and reach the stocking density range).
- Species mix: see the application annex for a list of funded trees and shrubs, and a list of unfunded shrubs that you may include but will not be funded. The following thresholds apply to the net planted area;
 - Where honorary broadleaves are present on site up to 20% may be replanted, or up to the percentage present at the time of felling (whichever is lowest), can be replanted
 - Up to 20% woody shrubs from the approved species list may be included.
 - No one species to be more than 70% of the restocking area.
 - A minimum of 80% of the restocking coupes will comprise native trees (can include honorary broadleaves as stipulated above).
- Species selection: Use the Ecological Site Classification Tool to inform species selection based on the medium to high climate change projections up to 2080.

Refer to the species list in the application annex. You can get support from a Forestry Commission woodland officer.

Tree planting can be scheduled over a one-year period (one planting season).

The Forestry Commission has published guidance on [Managing England's woodlands in a climate emergency](#). You are advised to read and incorporate its advice into your applications.

2.1 Tree supply and biosecurity

You should speak to a tree nursery to ensure sufficient planting stock will be available for your project.

It is important that the plants and trees you use are free from pests and diseases. All applications received from 01 July 2023 onward will be included in a Biosecure Procurement Requirement Pilot. To be eligible for support under HS2WF during this pilot phase you must source your plants from suppliers who can provide evidence that they meet the requirements set out in the Plant Health Management Standard, available at: <https://planthealthy.org.uk/>.

This evidence should be provided to you from suppliers in one of two ways:

- current membership of the Plant Healthy Certification scheme (provision of a Certification Number) or have officially applied to become certified (provision of an Application Number). For nurseries who are not current members of Plant Healthy certification, this should be achieved within 12 months.
- successful Ready to Plant (RtP) assessment (provision of a RtP Assessment Voucher with a unique Reference Number) associated with the grant agreement number.

You will be asked to provide this evidence (one or more of the above Numbers) when you claim for your trees. You will also be asked about your intended supply at point of application, but you are not obliged to stick with your initial choice.

Please consider that it is your responsibility to ensure that the trees you source are compliant with this procurement requirement. **Failure to adhere to the procurement requirement may result in a reduction in the payment of your claim.**

The Ready to Plant assessment allows suppliers who are not Plant Healthy certified to demonstrate that their plants comply with the requirements of the Plant Health Management Standard. The assessment only applies for each specific grant agreement so you will need to give your UTCF reference number to each nursery when ordering your stock. Each nursery will need to apply for a Ready to Plant assessment if they are

not members of Plant Healthy. Suppliers who wish to supply more than one grant agreement will need to apply for a Ready to Plant assessment for each one. You will find out more about Ready to Plant at: <https://readytoplant.fera.co.uk/>

A selection of grant recipients will be contacted by the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate for a post-planting inspection approximately 18 months after the trees have been planted. If APHA issue a notice to remove the trees, the Grant Recipient will be expected to claim force majeure under the terms of their grant agreement.

If you are not purchasing your trees from a commercial supplier, you will be exempt from this requirement during the pilot phase. It is recommended that exemptions are requested at application stage. You must wait for the exemption to be approved by the FC in writing, prior to sourcing the trees, to ensure your claims are valid. When you apply for your exemption, you must provide a summary of how and where your trees were sourced, and the biosecurity measures that were in place to reduce the risks to those trees from diseases and insect pests. To apply for an exemption please complete and submit a HS2WF Biosecure Procurement Exemption form.

See Forest Research's pest and disease resources for usual information on control measures: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/>

2.2 The HS2WF Agreement

If your application is eligible and successful, you will be offered a HS2WF Grant. If you accept the offer you will enter into an Agreement with HS2 Ltd. This Agreement will consist of:

- The HS2WF Grant Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions (or simply "Terms and Conditions")
- The Grant Recipient's Application Form and Annex
- The Agreement Map
- The Grant Offer Letter
- The Acceptance Letter

Your agreement duration will include two periods: a **Grant Funding Period** and a **Maintenance Period**.

2.2.1 Agreement Duration

With respect to capital payments for tree planting the **Grant Funding Period** expires on 31st March 2025. The Grant Funding Period may not run for this full period if you finish

the work before then. During this period, you must complete all tree planting according to the schedule in your Grant Agreement.

You must not submit a claim for payment until you have paid for the capital items in the claim and the payment for them has left your bank account. You must not begin capital works before you have formally accepted your HS2WF Agreement.

You must:

- Maintain any capital items funded through the scheme for 5 years from the date of the final grant payment. This is called the **Maintenance Period** of the Agreement. Your Agreement may be subject to inspection during the Maintenance Period
- Have management control of the land for the length of the Agreement (the Grant Funding Period to undertake the capital work and maintenance Period). [Section 3.2](#) explains how this requirement applies if you are a landlord or a tenant

2.3 How applications are selected

HS2WF PAWS restoration is a criteria-based competitive scheme. Applicants need to score their applications and we will review this. Applications received in each application cycle will be ranked based on their score and offers will be made based on budget availability. Where there is sufficient budget to fund all the applications received in each application cycle then all eligible applications will progress.

You need to score your application first using the application annex, we will review and confirm your score. Points will be awarded based proximity to the HS2 Phase One route, the size of the scheme, the threats that are being managed and use of natural regeneration. Complete and eligible applications will be reviewed by the HS2 Review Panel before being assigned to an FC Woodland Officer for a site visit.

Canvassing Forestry Commission staff (communicating with us with the intention of influencing HS2WF funding decisions or obtaining information that is not available to other applicants) is strictly prohibited. Applications from those found to have canvassed Forestry Commission staff will be rejected.

2.4 What the grant cannot pay for

HS2WF cannot be used to pay for the cost of any of the following, which will not be considered Eligible Expenditure:

- Any capital works (tree planting) initiated before the Agreement Commencement Date
- Planning application fees or other transactional fees
- Meeting legal requirements, including planning conditions

- Planting of replacement trees

The full list of ineligible expenditure is set out in part 5 of the HS2WF Terms and Conditions. Eligible expenditure is described in [section 4.2.1](#).

3 Who can apply and what land is eligible

To confirm your eligibility for the HS2WF you will need to complete the declaration on the HS2WF Application Form. You must also confirm your commitment to abide by the [Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants](#). If you do not do this or if, during our processing of your application, we find any part of your application is not eligible we will reject part or all of your application.

As long as they have control of all the land and all the activities needed to meet the obligations of the Grant for the full duration of the Agreement, HS2WF is open to land managers who are either:

- An owner occupier
- A tenant
- A landlord
- A licensor

On tenanted land both tenants and landlords will need to agree to the proposal. We will use the government's 'Spotlight' system to undertake due diligence checks on applicants and to ensure the safe award of HS2 funds. Spotlight enables the checking of information on grant applicants from across government to reduce the risk of fraud, dual-funding and the mismanagement of grant aid.

3.1 Eligible Land

3.1.1 What land can be entered into the scheme

Land included in a HS2WF PAWS restoration application must be classified as ancient replanted woodland (dominated by >50% non-native broadleaf or conifer species) on the [Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory](#). If you believe your woodland is ancient but is not included on the NE Ancient Woodland Inventory, please contact the grant mailbox hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk.

Your land should be inside the [25-mile zone](#) surrounding the HS2 Phase One route as shown on the [HS2WF map](#) (PDF, 239 KB, 1 page). If your land falls just outside this zone but you make a proposal of outstanding quality, you may be considered for funding at the discretion of the Forestry Commission and the HS2 Woodland Fund Review Panel.

3.1.2 Ineligible land

The following land is not eligible for HS2WF and you cannot include it in your application:

- Any land which is not within the 25 mile eligibility zone, or just outside at the discretion of the Forestry Commission and the HS2 Woodland Fund Review Panel.
- Land where you do not have management control for the duration of the Agreement
- Land that is subject to a dispute between a landlord and tenants
- Land that is currently in an agri-environment agreement

3.2 Management control

You must have management control of the land and all activities needed to meet the requirements of the HS2WF Agreement for its full duration (see [Section 2.2.1](#)). If you do not, you must get the written consent of all other parties who have management control of the land and activities to undertake these activities for the duration of the Agreement.

3.2.1 Tenants

If you are a tenant applying for an Agreement in your name, you must have:

- Control of all the activities needed to meet the scheme requirements
- Security of tenure for the duration of the Agreement
- Management control of all the Agreement land for the duration of the Agreement.
- Agreement from your landlord to enter into the Agreement (your landlord must countersign the Application Form). If you are not able to do this, you cannot include that area of land in your application

If the landlord takes over a HS2WF Agreement from you once your tenancy has ended, they must be eligible to do so. Tenants should seek legal advice on their position should their tenancy cease unexpectedly before the end of any HS2WF Agreement.

If you are a tenant, including under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 (a Farm Business Tenancy) or equivalent, it is your responsibility to check that you do not breach the terms of your tenancy by joining the HS2WF.

3.2.2 Landlords

Landlords will not be able to apply for funding on any land that is or has been subject to dispute within the last 12 months, for example, a contested notice to quit.

3.2.3 Partnerships

If you are in a business partnership, you can apply to the HS2WF.

3.2.4 Licensors

If you are a licensor, you can apply to HS2WF. It is your responsibility to make sure that the licensee does not breach the Terms and Conditions of the HS2WF Agreement. You must make sure that the licensee is aware of the requirements of the Agreement, as relevant to the licence, and include these in the licence agreement.

3.2.5 Licensees

If you are a licensee, you may be eligible to receive funding from the HS2WF in certain circumstances if you can demonstrate full management control of the land for the duration of the Agreement.

3.2.6 Land owned by public bodies

Crown Bodies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies are not eligible. Other public bodies (local authorities, national parks) are eligible where tree planting is not already required or paid for through:

- Payment from EU and Exchequer funds
- Grant aid from any other public body
- Any other form of legally binding obligation, including tenancies

3.2.7 Joint applications and consortia

Applications from multiple land managers are eligible for the HS2WF.

Once potential applicants have read this Grant Manual and have decided to pursue a joint HS2WF application, they will need to agree on the person who will make the application on their behalf – the 'lead applicant'. If the application is successful, the lead applicant will become the named Grant Recipient on behalf of the land managers; they will be responsible for all requirements of the Agreement. We will need all the land managers to countersign the HS2WF Application Form confirming their consent that the lead applicant can act on their behalf, including entering into a HS2WF Agreement.

The lead applicant will be the main business contact for the HS2WF application and subsequent HS2WF Agreement. This person will sign the HS2WF Agreement on behalf of all the land managers, act on behalf of the land managers and receive HS2WF payments. Any action to recover grant funding under a HS2WF Agreement will also be with the lead applicant. The lead applicant may authorise an agent to act on their behalf.

An agreement to collaborate between the land managers will have to be established to support the HS2WF application and meet the requirements of any subsequent HS2WF Agreement. This should ensure compliance with the HS2WF Agreement will be the shared responsibility of those who are party to the agreement to collaborate, but day-to-day administration will be the responsibility of the lead applicant. It will also need to

apportion payments to the land managers, and arrangements to reimburse the lead applicant if the recovery of grant funds is required. The Forestry Commission will not be involved in the drafting, production or any disputes related to this private consortium agreement, but you will need to provide evidence of these arrangements to us if you are asked to.

3.2.8 Compatibility with the Basic Payment Scheme

If you currently receive BPS payments then you will need to discuss this with the Forestry Commission and the RPA to identify if your project will be eligible to continue to receive these payments if you enter into a HS2WF Agreement. This will be explored on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 Land receiving other funding or under other agreements

You cannot use HS2WF funding to carry out capital works that are required under other agreements. For example, work might be required as part of a tenancy agreement or grant schemes such as Countryside Stewardship.

You must declare that any work proposed as part of your application does not breach the conditions of any other agreement. We will carry out checks to make sure that capital works are not funded twice from public money. If we find a HS2WF application would result in dual funding or a conflict between multiple sources of government funding, we will reject the application. If this is found to be the case after an Agreement is in place, we may recover the HS2WF Grant funds paid to date and close the Agreement.

You can't apply to HS2WF if your proposal is subject to a current or recently withdrawn application for woodland funding through Countryside Stewardship.

3.4 Business viability test

We will complete due diligence checks on applications and applicants, including checks on previous grant performance and the background of the potential grant recipient, plus basic financial checks. If we assess your application as not financially viable, we may not offer you an Agreement. Applications involving capital expenditure for tree planting over certain limits will require additional evidence and undergo additional checks. This is set out in table 2.

Table 2. Evidence of business viability

Type of Business	Value of tree planting over £50k	Value of tree planting over £150k	Value of tree planting over £500k
Sole Trader, partnership, or trust	Savings statements, bank statements,	Accountant's letter, confirming that the applicant has sufficient finances to complete the capital works in the application and how these funds will be sourced, for example, savings, loan, etc.	Accountant's letter and the two previous year's tax returns or annual returns if trust
Company (charitable, private, or public)	Accountant's certificate (companies will most likely have a secretary, or access to an accountant)	Accountant's letter and the previous year's accounts	3 years accounts
Local Authority/public body	Departmental letter of authority to spend on capital items in the agreement	Departmental letter for authority to spend on capital items in the agreement	Access for FC to 3 years accounts, this may be online

Requesting the above information is to confirm that the business or SBI has the resources from trading profits, reserves or loans to undertake the work proposed in the application. If this is required, we will need this before we can offer an Agreement.

Where confirmation from an accountant is needed, they will need to provide a letter on headed paper, dated within the last three months, that confirms at least the following:

- They are a chartered accountant and act as the accountant for the applicant.
- They can confirm that the applicant has sufficient finances to complete the capital works (tree planting) in the application and how these funds will be sourced (e.g., savings, loan etc).
- Their understanding of the total value of the capital works in the application.

4 How it works

This section provides information about the main elements of the HS2WF PAWS restoration.

The HS2 Woodland Fund is open year-round but PAWS restoration applications will be assessed four times per year. It takes up to five months from receiving a valid and complete application to an Agreement being offered. You will have one planting season available to complete your project.

A UKFS-compliant, Forestry Commission approved **Woodland Management Plan** (WMP) must be in place before an agreement is offered. The WMP must have been approved in principle by the Woodland Officer before the application is submitted. All felling permissions must be in place before an agreement is offered.

The application process for PAWS restoration includes the completion of a Woodland Condition Assessment (form and guidance available on the [Woodland Wildlife Toolkit webpages](#)). The England Woodland Biodiversity Group and Forest Research have developed the woodland condition survey to help woodland managers rapidly assess the ecological condition of their woodland. This straightforward assessment, which involves a walking survey through your wood, will give an overview of the condition of your wood's habitats and will identify any issues you may need to address as part of your HS2WF PAWS restoration application. The assessment will need to cover the whole woodland, not just the areas to be felled and restored. The Woodland Condition Assessment can be used if it has been undertaken within the last 12 months.

Although it is preferred that you undertake the survey before applying, to inform your self-scoring in the application form, a Forestry Commission Woodland Officer will be able to advise on its undertaking during a site visit if necessary. The assessment must be submitted with the final application if not with the initial application.

Upon receipt of an application a Forestry Commission Administration Officer will assess your application to make sure that it is complete, and that all eligibility requirements have been met. Your self-score will be checked and verified. Complete and eligible applications will then be reviewed by the HS2 Review Panel before being assigned to an FC Woodland Officer for a site visit. The Woodland Officer will assess the need for the capital items included in the application form during the site visit and using the Woodland Condition Assessment. The top 20% most expensive applications received in any application cycle must be formally approved by the Review Panel at a second meeting. We will inform you if your application is one of those selected for a final Panel review.

If the process or application requirements for HS2WF change, the HS2WF gov.uk page will be updated, and we will notify any current applicants in writing within 14 days.

If you wish to clarify any application requirements or the application process, please email hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk.

If we consider requests for information or support relevant to all applicants, we will provide additional guidance to all potential applicants via an eAlert to our subscriber mailing list¹, and directly by email to those who have already applied (via the contact information provided for or by the lead applicant), to ensure fairness and openness. We may be unable to respond to other requests due to the competitive application process. We will consider the commercial sensitivity of all requests received before providing additional guidance to all applicants. If relating information is relevant to all applicants and considered commercially sensitive, we will discuss with the enquiring applicant before releasing any information. In this case, we may be unable to support the request due to the competitive application process. We reserve the right not to answer questions that we deem could prejudice the Forestry Commission's Commercial interests.

Canvassing Forestry Commission staff (communicating with us with the intention of influencing HS2WF funding decisions or obtaining information that is not available to other applicants) is strictly prohibited. Applications from those found to have canvassed Forestry Commission staff will be rejected.

4.1 Eligibility requirements

4.1.1 Felling Licences and restocking conditions

Prior to felling, an approved felling licence must be in place, including a 10-year restocking condition that has the correct species to meet the HS2WF scheme rules. Where natural regeneration is used, the conditions of the felling licence must require restocking should the natural regeneration fail.

Applications will not be supported where the felling has already taken place and the HS2WF proposal does not represent an improved environmental outcome to the existing restocking conditions.

4.1.2 Biosecurity

The species you select for planting must take into account any phytosanitary (plant health) restrictions or measures in place relating to preventing the introduction and spread of invasive tree pests and diseases, as well as the potential impact of existing threats. You must also consider how you can implement appropriate biosecurity

¹ Subscribe to our eAlert mailing list at www.gov.uk/government/collections/email-alerts-ealerts-for-grants-and-regulations-customers.

measures for the project and site, such as procuring trees for planting from pest and disease-free areas (see [Section 2.1](#)). You can find information on [Tree pests and diseases](#) and biosecurity in [Prevent the introduction and spread of tree pests and diseases](#) guides on GOV.UK.

4.2 Payments

The HS2WF PAWS restoration will pay 100% of fixed standard costs for a range of capital items to plant and protect new trees.

4.2.1 Standard costs for eligible expenditure

See table 3 below for a description of the standard costs for eligible expenditure for the HS2WF PAWS restoration.

Table 3. Standard Costs for eligible expenditure

Description of eligible expenditure	Payment rate	Specification
Tree planting	£1.72 / tree	CS TE4
Tree shelters	£2.43 / tree	CS TE5
Temporary deer fencing	£8.09 / m	CS FG10
Post and wire fencing	£7.92 / m	CS FG1
Sheep netting	£9.34 / m	CS FG2
Rabbit netting supplement	£5.65 / m	CS FG4
Wooden field gate	£489.90 / gate	CS FG12
Stone wall top wiring	£5.54 / m	CS BN13

Badger gate	£61.81 / m	CS FG14
Small leaky woody dams 1-3m	£461.39 / m	CS RP32
Large leaky woody dams 3-5m	£764.42 / m	CS RP33
Deer high seat	£265 / seat	See appendix 1.
Deer high seat supplement (supplement to make seat free-standing)	£180 / unit	See appendix 1.
Deer enclosure plot	£212.56 / plot	CS FG11
Deer fencing	£10.27 / m	CS FG9
Invasive species control list A	£3,500 / ha	See appendix 1
Invasive species control list A 2.5-4m	£4,000 / ha	
Invasive species control list A 4+m	£5,500 / ha	
Invasive species control list B	£347 / ha	See appendix 1
Invasive species control list C	£270.90 / ha	See appendix 1
Deer impact assessments	£300 up to 25 ha	See appendix 1.
Deer vehicle gates (3m x 1.8m)	£749.63 / gate	See appendix 1.

Deer pedestrian gates (0.9m x 1.8m)	£475.44 / gate	See appendix 1.
Ground prep for natural regeneration	£121.85 / ha	See appendix 1.
Squirrel management cage trap	£23.40 / unit	See appendix 1.
Squirrel management multi-catch cage trap	£59.99 / unit	See appendix 1.
Squirrel management spring trap (mid-range)	£49 / unit	See appendix 1.
Squirrel automatic self-setting trap	£169 / unit	See appendix 1.

Any squirrel traps funded under the HS2WF for PAWS restoration applications must be legally compliant. Speak with your Woodland Officer if you're unsure. Ground preparation for natural regeneration is only available where there are no surviving ancient woodland flora, natural regeneration, or native understory plants present.

Once the work has been completed, you will need to submit a claim form to receive payment by 31st March in the financial year that the claim is due.

4.3 Scoring applications

Scoring is based on proximity to the HS2 Phase One line, the size of the application and the management of threats that are facing the woodland. The points allocated are shown in table 4.

Table 4

Category	Criterion	Points
Location	Proximity to the HS2 Phase One line	0-5 miles 20 points
		6-25 miles 15 points
Size	Total area (gross inc open space) hectares	0-4 hectares 20 points
		5-10 hectares 30 points
		11+ hectares 40 points
Management of threats	Invasive species management	Yes 50 points No 0 points

Management of threats	Deer or squirrel control (deer impact assessment, high seats, exclosure plots or use of squirrel traps)	Yes 50 points No 0 points
Management of threats	Removal of non-native trees	Yes 50 points No 0 points
Management of threats	Creating conditions for natural regen (hectares of ground prep entered in application annex)	Yes 20 points No 0 points

4.4 Application maps

You must submit at least one map showing the boundary of your project and the location of all capital items included in your application annex. Below are links to examples of what these should look like.

- An [HS2 Work Area Map](#). This is a map showing the area of planned restoration activity, including the location of all capital items in your application, areas of open space, and fence lines.
- A Woodland Management Plan Map. This is a map from your Woodland Management Plan showing the entire woodland area and the location of different activity types. This map will demonstrate the context of your HS2WF application within your wider woodland.

All maps should show a 6 figure OS grid reference, North arrow, scale, and key, and all compartment numbers in your application annex should be marked on the maps. You should number your maps and ensure that the name of your woodland is written on it clearly. Further details on mapping standards are contained in section 6.

4.5 Authorising an agent

You can complete the application and make a claim yourself or authorise an agent to do so on your behalf.

If an agent will be acting on your behalf to complete an application or claim forms, you need to give them the appropriate permission levels by completing an [Forestry Commission Agent Authority Form](#). If you have already authorised your agent to act on your behalf with us and wish these existing permissions to apply to your HS2WF application, you need to confirm this on your HS2WF Application Form.

4.6 Your Agreement Commencement Date

The Agreement will start on the date you sign your Grant Offer Acceptance Letter (the Commencement Date).

5 How to apply

To apply, you need to take the following steps.

5.1 Produce a Woodland Management Plan

Before applying to the HS2WF for PAWS restoration a UKFS-compliant, FC-approved **Woodland Management Plan** (WMP) must be in place before an agreement is offered. The WMP must have been approved in principle by the Woodland Officer before the application is submitted. All felling permissions must be in place before an agreement is offered.

5.2 Complete your application

Before making your application, please read the Grant Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions. You will need to confirm you have read and understand the Terms and Conditions in order for us to consider your application.

To make an application you will need to complete and submit:

- HS2WF Application Form and annex
- HS2 work area map and management plan map
- Completed Woodland Condition Assessment (can be completed during the site visit if required)
- Where applicable, attached a copy of your tenancy agreement
- Where applicable, completed and attached an FC agent authority form
- where applicable, provide evidence of business viability

You will need to have any necessary permissions or consent in place before you carry out any work and provide evidence of this if we request it to support an inspection. You do not need to provide it with your application.

You must complete your application in English. If you do not complete a question or make the required declarations in the HS2WF Application Form, or if you provide an answer that shows your application is not eligible for HS2WF, we will reject your application.

You can get the application forms from on GOV.UK: [HS2WF application form](#).

If you are unable to download the forms, please contact us by email at hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk or by post:

HS2 Woodland Fund – HS2WF
Forestry Commission
National Office, England
620 Bristol Business Park
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol, BS16 1EJ

5.2.1 Confidentiality

If any elements of your application should be treated as confidential, please let us know. You can do this with an additional document supporting your application, setting out which information is confidential and why.

5.3 Submitting your application

The HS2 Woodland Fund is open year-round and you can apply at any time but it is important to note that PAWS restoration applications will be assessed four times per year (see table 1 for deadlines). You will have one planting season available to complete your project.

You should email your completed application forms and supporting documents to hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk or you can contact us by post at the address above. If you have submitted your application and wish to make a change this can be done by sending the revision to hs2woodlandfund@forestrycommission.gov.uk.

5.4 Working with us on your application

We will carry out checks to make sure your application is complete and eligible. If it is incomplete or we need to clarify parts of the application, we will contact you to request the additional information. If this is not provided the application will be rejected. We will also check the application's score. If these checks are passed, the application will be passed to the HS2 Review Panel before a site visit is organised with an Forestry Commission Woodland Officer.

5.5 Accepting your Agreement

After all Forestry Commission checks have been completed you will be notified of the outcome of your application. If you are successful, we will write to you to offer you a HS2WF Agreement. You can accept or reject the Agreement offer by signing the Acceptance Letter and returning it to us using the contact details in [Section 5.2](#).

We will accept wet signatures and Qualified Electronic Signatures (QES) for your final agreement. If you accept the Agreement, you will be confirming that you have read, understand, and accept the HS2WF Grant Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions.

5.6 Where to get help

Forestry Commission Woodland Officers provide technical advice on PAWS restoration applications. You can also contact your local Woodland Officer for pre-application and technical advice before you make your application. Your Woodland Officer will give you advice and let you know if you need to provide more information with your application and will work with you to provide technical advice after you have submitted your initial application. You can find contact details on GOV.UK at: [Office access and opening times](#).

5.7 Getting consent

It is your responsibility to get all consents, approvals, or permissions that you may need to carry out the work funded under your Agreement. These consents, approvals and permissions must remain effective for the duration of the Agreement and we may ask for evidence of this.

5.7.1 Other considerations

When you carry out work under the Agreement, remember that you must not breach any other rules or laws, such as:

- Breaking byelaws.
- Obstructing public rights of way.
- Blocking or restricting access to 'open access' land.
- Affecting oil or gas pipelines.

5.8 Withdrawing your application

You can withdraw your application at any time by sending an e-mail or writing to us using the details in [Section 5.2](#). Please explain the reason(s) why you are withdrawing your application. This feedback will help us improve the HS2WF and our service.

5.9 Disputes, appeals and complaints

If you are unhappy with a decision we have taken about your application or Agreement, you can make an appeal. If you are unhappy with the service you have had from the Forestry Commission, you can email, write, or call us. Full guidance about how to make a compliant or appeal is available [online](#).

6 Mapping Standards

6.1 Preparing a map for your application

A map showing all the work area and all capital items must be provided with your HS2WF application. If the application is successful and you are offered an Agreement, the map supplied with the application will become the "Agreement Map". It therefore needs to be clear, legible, and meet the standards set out below (see Section 6.3).

6.2 How to create a map

Maps should be produced at a scale of 1:1,250. Where application areas are in more than one geographical area, a map for each will be required.

You can use your own map if it meets the standards in Section 6.3, or you can use a base map requested through the [Forestry Commission's Map Request Service](#). If you use this service, the Forestry Commission will supply a blank base map for you to mark up by hand to show your proposal. If you need a map from our Map Request Service please request it as early as possible. We will supply base maps to applicants either by post or electronically (via email).

6.3 Minimum mapping standards

When creating an Application Map, you must comply with the following rules:

- The map number and the total number of maps (e.g., '1 of 3') must be visible
- The boundary of the site must be clearly marked by a coloured line – this must encompass the entire area included within the application
- Any (sub)compartments must be labelled with a reference that matches the (sub)compartment reference provided in the HS2WF annex
- the location of the proposed work must be shown and marked with a coloured line or shaded/hatched area with the capital items listed next to them or in a legend - this includes proposed restocking areas and must show any fence lines and the type of fence
- any proposed areas of open space within the restock areas must be shown
- The name of the property or site name
- Include a six figure OS grid reference for the centre of the map
- If a mistake is made do not use correction fluid; strike through the mistake instead

7 Scheme requirements and Agreement management

You must read and meet the requirements detailed in this section as these are mandatory for all HS2WF Grant Recipients. 'Grant Recipient' means the person (whether an individual, company or other entity) who has entered into the HS2WF Agreement as defined in the Grant Funding Agreement.

7.1 Entering into an Agreement

If your application is successful, we will send you a Grant Offer Letter. If you want to accept a HS2WF Agreement, you must return the signed Acceptance Letter to us within 15 working days of the date of the Grant Offer Letter. If you do not accept your offer within this time, we will withdraw it.

7.1.1 Agreement amendments

We will consider changes to planting year and works but this will be at our discretion and based on available budget. We make no guarantee that a change will be possible. We may terminate the Agreement, or reclaim or reduce payments, where we consider the changes will not deliver the objectives of the HS2WF Agreement.

7.1.2 Changes of ownership (transfers) and management

We may allow transfers of HS2WF Agreements and accept changes in management control. Part-transfers will not be considered, please see [operations note 63](#).

If we allow a transfer or change in management control, we will pay the new landowner the remaining Grant due if they take on and comply with the Agreement. However, we will reclaim any Grant funds paid to the previous owner, even after any land sale, if the Terms and Conditions of the Agreement are not met. If you want to manage this liability you must put in place an Agreement with the new landowner.

You must notify us of a transfer or any change in the management control that may affect the Agreement – using the contact details in [Section 5.2](#) – within three months of a change taking place. If you do not, the HS2WF Agreement will be terminated, and the Grant recovered.

At the point of a transfer or change of management control, we have the right to terminate the Agreement and may at that time recover the Grant if the objectives of the Agreement have not been met.

7.2 Making claims

Send your claim forms to us using the contact details in [Section 5.2](#). Claim forms must be received by 31st March in the year that the planting work is scheduled to be completed (as set out in the Agreement document), unless we agree an amendment to extend the Grant Funding Period. You must have paid for the capital items that you are claiming for, and the payment must have left your bank account.

A claim form will be provided with you Grant Agreement or can be requested from us using the contact details in [Section 5.2](#). The Forestry Commission will accept one grant claim per year for your agreement.

7.3 Inspections

Agreements are subject to inspection to verify that the requirements of the Agreement, including completion of all tree planting, have been met. This will include inspections during the Maintenance Period. You will receive 48 hours' notice of an inspection. You must allow authorised inspectors to access the land under the Terms and Conditions of your Agreement. Where the Agreement has been selected for inspection, valid claims are paid within 90 working days. Payments will not be made on any part of the Agreement until the inspection has been undertaken and passed.

7.4 Evidence and record keeping

The table below summarises the evidence you need to support a HS2WF claim, when this is required, whether you need to retain a record and for how long.

Table 5. Evidence

Evidence	Checks	Record keeping
Evidence of expenditure (invoices, till receipts, bank statements, delivery notes, evidence of using your own labour, etc.).	Required upon request to support claims. All records kept must be dated on or after the Agreement Commencement Date. We will reject claims and will not pay them if, during an inspection, we find that you ordered or bought items before the start of the Agreement or that you carried out part or all of the work before, or after, the Agreement period.	You must retain these documents for a period of seven (7) years after the final payment of grant. We will retain this evidence for our records until your obligations under the HS2WF Agreement expire.

Evidence	Checks	Record keeping
Evidence of consent to undertake work.	We may ask to see this evidence at inspection.	To be kept for at least seven years after the final payment of Grant.
Photographs of each planting area.	We may ask for photo evidence of standard costs items or activities to confirm site details. If requested, the photos must be supplied within 15 days. Failure to provide this may result in your claim being delayed or withheld.	We will retain this evidence for our records until your obligations under the HS2WF Agreement expire.

7.5 Photographic evidence quality

Requirements apply equally to digital photographs or those supplied as paper photographs. All photographs must meet the following standards:

- Photographs must be in focus and clearly show the relevant capital item or environmental feature. If you send your images by email, please send as JPEG files. Digital images should not be smaller than 600 x 400 pixels and ideally the image file size no larger than 400KB. Printed photographs must be no smaller than 15 cm x 10 cm.
- Photograph to identify the feature or capital items concerned– it is your responsibility to have sufficient evidence that the investment or required management has taken place. For example, more than one photograph may be needed where the work exceeds the frame or is not clearly evident from a single photograph
- Where possible, include a significant feature to provide authenticity (for example, ditch, fence, farm building).
- Mark the photographed feature’s location, and direction from which the photograph has been taken, with an ‘X’ and an arrow on a copy of a map (or map extract) of the Agreement area.
- Take pictures consistently from the same spot for before and after photographs of the capital item.

7.5.1 Labelling photographs

Label photographs with the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid reference and compartment number. Give the HS2WF Agreement reference and the date. If you are sending more than one image, also include the image number.

7.6 Publicity requirements

The Terms and Conditions require you to comply with all instructions and guidance relating to acknowledging and publicising the support provided. The Forestry Commission may publicise in the press information about the grant and funded activities to assist with promotion of the fund.

7.7 Force majeure

You may be unable to meet your requirements under the Agreement because of force majeure or exceptional circumstances. If this happens, you must write to tell us within 15 days from the date on which you (or any person authorised to act for you) identify the issue. You will need to provide evidence in writing to show:

- What has happened
- How the event meant you were unable to meet the scheme rules

Force majeure or exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- The death or long-term professional incapacity of the Grant Recipient
- A severe natural disaster seriously affecting the holding
- A plant disease affecting part or all of the Grant Recipient's trees
- Expropriation of all or a large part of the holding (provided that the expropriation could not have been anticipated at the time the application)

We will consider the facts to decide whether or not the Grant Recipient is relieved of all or part of their obligations under the Agreement, and whether all or part of the Grant should be withheld or repaid. If you are aware of the issue when entering into your Agreement, then it is unlikely to fall under force majeure or exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 – Standard Cost Item Specifications

Table 3 sets out the standard cost items available for eligible expenditure for the HS2WF PAWS restoration. Several items mirror Countryside Stewardship (CS) and the CS specification must be followed (hyperlinks in table 3). The specifications for standard cost items that are not available in CS are provided in this appendix.

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
Invasive species control list A average height is less than 2.5m tall	Level of gentle slope (0-11 degree incline)	£3,500 / ha	The higher rate will apply where the site is classed in 1 or more of these categories, for example if the site is on a steep slope with an average height of less than 2.5m. These items can be used within the target area for PAWs restoration to control rhododendron, cherry laurel, and holly.
Invasive species control list A between 2.5-4m tall	Moderate slope (12 to 18 degree incline)	£4,000 / ha	Agreement holders need to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cut all live material from the stump, allowing access for chemical spraying of any re-growth
Invasive species control list A average height is over 4m tall	Steep or very steep slope (19 degrees or more)	£5,500 / ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> treat all stumps with a suitable herbicide on the day of being cut and in frost free and rain free conditions - rain should not be forecast for at least 6 hours dispose of cut material so that it allows access to stumps for chemical spraying of any re-growth control any injurious weed species, when the site regenerates, if there is a risk of spread to pasture land (used by grazing livestock or conserved for forage) chemically treat re-growth with a recommended herbicide - follow the manufacturer's guidance on application rates and safety requirements keep the operations in line with recommendations in the Forestry

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
			<p>Commission practice guide Managing and controlling invasive rhododendron</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect any native ground flora that may be within the target area. <p>Removing infected rhododendron</p> <p>When removing rhododendron infected with <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> or <i>Phytophthora kernoviae</i>, agreement holders must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clean or disinfect clothing, equipment and vehicles according to advice given in the Forestry Commission biosecurity guidance use disinfectants that have gone through a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) safety assessment as well as an environmental assessment. <p>Burning waste material</p> <p>Agreement holders may need to discuss whether to burn cut waste material with their local Forestry Commission or Natural England adviser. If told to burn it, agreement holders must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> agree in advance where the burn site will be build bonfires far enough away from trees (at least 10m from the crown of any tree) to avoid damaging them make sure that burning sites and piles of wood are not on patches of ground where they could damage species-rich grassland, anthills or other ecological or archaeological features clean up the site as soon as possible after burning - burning on a metal sheet reduces damage to the soil and makes it easier to remove ash from the site

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
Invasive species control list B	n/a	£347 / ha	<p>This item can be used for the removal of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Himalayan balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>) • Japanese knotweed (<i>Fallopia japonica</i>) • Shalton (<i>Gaultheria shalton</i>) <p>This item cannot be used for rush control.</p> <p>Agreement holders must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In agreement with a Woodland Officer, control the invasive species so that cover is reduced to a set proportion by a set date • Agree the method of control with a Woodland Officer, this could include cutting by hand, mechanical cutting, applying herbicide or an alternative agreed method • Only carry out chemical control on specifically identified areas, make sure the person spraying has the relevant qualifications and certifications • Control any re-infestation during the term of the agreement • Protect any native ground flora that may be within the control area. • All herbicide applications must follow the law and relevant codes of practice. <p>Chemical Control should be undertaken at the optimal time for the particular species within the 'on label' approval time limits.</p> <p>Further information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the guide to harmful weeds and invasive, non-native plants this includes information on the disposal, including burning, of non-native invasive species

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> guidance on the Wildlife and Countryside Act and landowners' responsibilities
Invasive species control list C	n/a	£270.90 / ha	<p>This item supports chemical control of the following species;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American skunk cabbage (<i>Lysichiton americanus</i>) Snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>) Variegated yellow archangel (<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>Argentatum</i>) Bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) <p>Agreement holders will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In agreement with a Woodland Officer, control the invasive species so that cover is reduced to a set proportion by a set date Use glyphosate to control the invasive species, providing this is within the approval for the product at the time of application. Only carry out chemical control on specifically identified areas As the site regenerates control any regrowth or weeds such as nettle, thistle, dock or ragwort. Protect any native ground flora that may be within the control area. All herbicide applications must follow the law and relevant codes of practice. Natural England's bracken control guidelines should also be followed. <p>Timing To be undertaken within the first year. Chemical Control should be undertaken at the optimal time for the particular species within the on label approval time limits.</p> <p>Further information Make sure any relevant consents are in place before carrying out the work. This</p>

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
			includes consent from the Environment Agency to spray near a watercourse.
Deer impact assessments	n/a	£300 up to 25 ha	<p>The agreement holder will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a competent person carry out a walk over visual assessment of each wood and complete an appropriate reporting form such as the Deer Initiative Deer Impact Assessment Form, include a map of the route taken and annotated photographs from fixed points in the woodland • Complete a walk over visual assessment and deer impact assessment form in year 1 and 2 of the agreement • Prepare a summary report in year 2 • Submit the deer impact assessment prepared in year 1 of the agreement to the Forestry Commission in time to support the first claim for payment • The impact assessment will determine the level of damage and inform the required control methodology • Where required deer management will be implemented with lethal control <p>Further information</p> <p>Advice on culls can be obtained for organisations such as the Deer Initiative. Where a local deer management group exists the Forestry Commission expects the owner or a representative to be an active member of that group throughout the period of this agreement.</p> <p>Timing</p> <p>To be undertaken within year 1 and 2. To be paid either on completion and submission of the summary report in year 2 or in instalments with £100 in year 1 and £200 in year 2.</p>

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
Deer vehicle gates (3m x 1.8m)	n/a	£749.63 / gate	To install a deer proof vehicle gate within the deer fence. Advice on the specification for such gates can be found in UKFS Technical Guide: Forest Fencing . Where a deer fence is used, additional payments will not normally be available for tree shelters within the fenced area.
Deer pedestrian gates (0.9m x 1.8m)	n/a	£475.44 / gate	To install a deer-proof pedestrian gate within the deer fence. Advice on the specification for such gates can be found in UKFS Technical Guide: Forest Fencing .
Deer high seat	n/a	£265 / seat	To supply a galvanized, portable, lean-to deer high seat that provides a safe, temporary vantage point from which to cull deer, reducing the impact their browsing has on the land.
Deer high seat supplement (supplement to make seat free-standing)	n/a	£180 / unit	To supplement the rate for a deer high seat when a freestanding seat is required.
Ground prep for natural regeneration	n/a	£121.85 / ha	Agreement holders are likely to need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move areas of excessive brash into windrows (minimum of 15m apart) or remove from site to provide suitable growing conditions • Scarify the ground to enable native broadleaf seed to establish in the mineral soil layer • Seek agreement from the Forestry Commission to burn brash, if burning is agreed, measures must be in place to protect native ground flora – for example burning on raised metal sheets • Avoid areas of important native ground flora • Protect remaining trees / seed trees during the operation

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark on a map the areas where work has been undertaken, submit the map with the claim form
Squirrel management cage trap	n/a	£23.40 / unit	<p>To be undertaken within the target area for PAWs restoration, where the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer has identified that squirrel management is required based on both a site visit and site condition assessment.</p> <p>In red squirrel or pine marten areas, only live trapping is permitted.</p> <p>The agreement holder will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the traps in the areas agreed with the Forestry Commission Traps must meet legal specifications, including the Spring Traps Approval Order 2018, and the Spring Traps Approval (Variation) Order 2021 The agreement reference must be marked on the side of the trap to aid identification during inspection All traps will be set, operated and maintained as per good practice guidance throughout the period of the agreement Lethal traps must be set in an appropriate tunnel which is suitable for the purpose The cage trap will be a spring loaded metal trap. The trap will be large enough to hold a squirrel. Typically dimensions are 450mm x 120mm x 110mm Monitoring will be undertaken annually to ascertain which areas should be used for trapping each year. The recommended methodology for monitoring is the 'Grey Squirrel Activity and Impact Assessment' guidance
Squirrel management multi-catch cage trap	n/a	£59.99 / unit	
Squirrel management spring trap (mid-range)	n/a	£49 / unit	
Squirrel automatic self-setting trap	n/a	£169 / unit	

Capital item	Slope of site	Payment rate	Description
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traps are to be maintained during the agreement and obligation period <p>Further information Examples of the minimum mid-range spring traps include the DOC 150, DOC 200 and procull traps, with further approved trap types and makes outlined in Article 2 of the Spring Traps Approval Order 2018. Further approved traps are outlined in the Spring Traps Approval (Variation) Order 2021 . Simple spring traps are not to be used under the mid-range payment rate. Any traps used must be legally compliant.</p> <p>The UKFS technical note on 'Controlling grey squirrels in forests and woodlands in the UK', which details control strategies, site selection and management methods should be consulted to aid in managing grey squirrel impacts.</p>