

Guidance for writing/reviewing your Woodland Management Plan when applying for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) Woodland Improvement

To be eligible for Woodland Improvement actions, supplements and capital items in Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier, you will need to have a Forestry Commission approved Woodland Management Plan (WMP) which is compliant with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), prior to application.

All woodland management plans must comply with the current version of the UK Forest Standard. The newest version, revised on 1st October 2024, can be found on [UK Forest Standard](#).

The objectives and content of the WMP must support **and** validate any actions, supplements and capital items being applied for within a CS Higher Tier agreement. Read further information about [writing a WMP](#).

Ensuring your WMP supports your CS Higher Tier application

You should ensure your Woodland Management Plan contains enough information to support your application for each action, supplement, and capital item which you intend to include in your CS Higher Tier application. This also includes sites on your holding with statutory designations. E.g. SSSI, Scheduled Monuments.

We recommend using both the [Grant finder tool](#) and [Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier: get ready to apply - GOV.UK](#) to research the requirements for each action/supplement/capital item in advance of writing your plan.

You should use this guide when:

You are writing a new management plan / are about to begin writing your plan and intend to apply for CS Higher Tier.

Or

You are reviewing your existing management plan, as part of making a pre-application for Higher Tier. Where a felling licence has already been issued, and felling works have commenced, there may be limitations to the types of amendments that can be made. In the first instance, please discuss any amendments with your local woodland officer.

Higher Tier Woodland Improvement Base Action– CWD2

What we expect to see in your management plan to support a CS Higher Tier application:

- Open ground management should be identified.
- Ride and access maintenance should be identified.
- Activities relating to the creation and maintenance of deadwood should be included in your plan.
- Reference the intent to undertake monitoring activities. This will require a Woodland Condition Assessment in years 1 and 9 of a CS Higher Tier agreement.
- Reference management objectives to control non-native flora and fauna, in addition to deer and squirrels, where relevant. Note: there is supplementary funding available for these activities – more detail will be required when applying for these supplementary actions.

Supplements and Stackable Actions

If you are intending to apply for any of the following supplements, **you should ensure that your WMP covers your intention to undertake the associated actions**, where appropriate.

The minimum detail we expect to be in your WMP, for each action, is outlined below:

Native and ASNW Woodland Supplement: CWS8

- Identification and management of successional scrub areas through cyclical cutting
- Outline of your intention to create and manage coppice, what areas and what species, rotation length, methods of protection.
- Other silvicultural operations, e.g. regeneration felling
- An intent to identify and map veteran trees, including the recruitment of future veteran trees and to release them from competing growth. e.g. halo thinning
- How your woodland operations will promote age structure and encourage/maintain species diversity to ensure a resilient woodland for the future. Information and location of any intended regeneration felling to promote natural regeneration and associated methods of protection from threats. e.g. Deer/squirrel etc.
- If you intend to graze your woodland, we expect reference to the headcount and type of grazing animal.

CWS2: Managing and Restoring Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Supplement

- Where appropriate, an intent to reduce the proportion of conifer canopy and non-native broadleaf species. Provide details on target species, restocking methods e.g. natural regeneration, direct seeding, planting, and protection etc.
- An intention to manage successional scrub through cyclical cutting.
- Outline of your intention to create and manage coppice, which areas, and species type/s.
- An intent to identify and map veteran trees, including the recruitment of future veteran trees and to release them from competing growth. e.g. halo thinning.
- How you will selectively thin to promote age and species diversity. How much area will be in the supplement.
- Information on any intended regeneration felling to promote and manage natural regeneration, which is appropriate for the site.
- Identify and map surviving ancient woodland features so that they can be targeted by management. e.g. Ancient Woodland indicator ground flora species.
- Optional - Ancient Woodland Assessment – Read the [guide from the Woodland Trust](#).

CWS5: Resilience Supplement

- Identification of areas of woodland which may be subject to threats including drought, windblow, pest and diseases etc.
- How you will selectively thin to promote age and species diversity. How much area will be in the supplement, mark on supplement map.
- Information on any intended regeneration felling to promote and manage natural regeneration, which is appropriate for the site and mapped where appropriate.
- Identification of methods, which you intend to use, to improve your woodland condition including increasing species and structural diversity e.g. this could be via re-stocking, under-planting etc. This may include a longer term (beyond the agreement length) ambition to transition to a continuous cover forestry (CCF) system.

CWS7: Historic Features Supplement

- Intention to manage vegetation cover over historic / archaeological features where appropriate.
- Intention to manage vegetative encroachment onto historic / archaeological features where this may negatively impact the feature.
- Reference that where access routes are being established, they are appropriately distanced from any historic or archaeological features and buffer zones are identified in the plan.
- If you have already contacted Historic England through the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) portal and received your Historic Environment Farm Environment Record (HEFER), you should include any recommendations in your management plan.

CWS9: Flood and Drought Supplement

A [feasibility study](#) is required for this supplement, in advance of a CS Higher Tier application and can also be used to inform the detail of the WMP.

- Any intended drainage works or modifications should be referenced in your WMP. You will need to agree these works with the Forestry Commission in writing before you can begin works. This may include re-wetting or temporary water storage solutions.
- If you intend to maintain any existing water control features (sluices, culverts, bunds, ditches etc) you should indicate an intention to do so in your plan.
- If you intend to retain, create, or allow the natural creation of log jams / build-up of woody material in watercourses, you should include this intention in your plan.
- If you have identified wet features and hollows in the woodland, you should indicate their locations on your annotated map. You should indicate your intent to not fill in these features and to not store materials nearby in a way that could negatively affect the features.
- Environment Agency / Local Authority consents may need to be in place prior to commencing activities associated with this option as identified in the feasibility study.

CWS10: 2-Zone Ride Management and CWS11: 3-Zone Ride management supplements

- If seeking funding for ride management, we would expect to see reference to the intended ride management regime in your management plan.
- Rides to be managed should be marked on annotated maps as part of a final CS Higher Tier application.
- Read the [ride management practice guide](#).

PA7: Species Management Plan

If species are identified in the WMP as a threat, and you wish to apply for species management actions and/or supplements, you must now also have a species management plan approved, ahead of CS Higher Tier application, in order to validate the following supplements.

Read more about the [species management plan](#).

- CSP13 Invasive plant species control and management (lower rate)
- CSP14 Invasive plant species control and management (intermediate rate)
- CSP15 Invasive plant species control and management (upper rate)

- CSP20 Edible dormouse control and management
- CSP21 Mink control and management
- CWS1 Deer control and management
- CWS3 Squirrel control and management

Additional Area Supplements

- CPAC1 Open access
- CPAC2 Access for people with reduced mobility
- CPAC3 Bridleway and cycle route access
- CPAC4 Footpath access
- CPAC5 Upgrading Countryside and Rights of Way 'open access land' and public rights of way for cyclists and horse riders
- CPAC6 Upgrading Countryside and Rights of Way 'open access land' and public rights of way for people of reduced mobility

- CSP2 Rewetting supplement: - restoration of wet woodland habitat
- CSP3 Bracken control
- CSP9: Threatened species
- CSP12 Rhododendron control and management
- CSW22 Connect river and floodplain habitats

Read the useful [species factsheets](#).

Capital Items

You can apply for capital items to support your Higher Tier application, alongside the CS Higher Tier actions and woodland supplements.

A list of capital items can be found here [Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier: preview guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Felling licences

If you are writing a new WMP, a plan of operations should be completed to include all proposed felling operations associated with the woodland compartments and your supplement areas. Approval of the woodland management plan and plan of operations will generate a 10-year felling licence.

If you have an existing approved WMP, with an associated felling licence, any changes to felling proposals are limited. If you need to change your felling proposals, you may need to make a new application. If you have already started to fell trees within the licence, you must complete any associated restocking conditions as these cannot be changed.

Amendments to Existing Woodland Management Plans

It is advised that you speak with your local woodland officer if you require to make any plan amendments. If you have an existing WMP which requires updating, please also refer to Section 8 of [‘how to create a woodland management plan’](#).