

English Woodland Grant Scheme

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Woodland Planning Grant Guide

Purpose

Woodland Planning Grant (WPG) contributes to the costs of producing management plans for existing woodland, and meets the planning requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance (UKWA) Standard.

The objectives of WPG are:

- To help owners realise their own management objectives, and help them access grants and other forms of support;
- To capture a sufficiently complete picture of the woodland(s) so that all decisions about woodland operations are efficient, based on good evidence and sustainable;
- To realise opportunities for sustaining and securing more public benefit from existing woodlands;
- To provide a replacement management planning process for those owners who have previously been receiving grant aid through Forest Plans (these Forest Plans are no longer available);
- To support woodland owners who intend to seek independent forest certification to the UKWA Standard;
- To help woodland owners meet Government Timber Procurement Policy requirements;
- To help woodland owners to access grants for timber and wood fuel production, including forestry machinery, woodland infrastructure / marketing costs and wood fuel boiler purchase.



Eligibility

- All woodland must be registered on the Rural Land Register (RLR) prior to submitting an application.
- An application for WPG must be approved by the FC before starting to prepare the Management Plan.
- The minimum woodland area for a WPG application is 3 ha.
- Only one Management Plan per property can be funded. A 'Property' is as defined in **EWGS Operations Note 3**.
- All existing woodland on a property, of any age class or species type, must be included in the application and shown on the application map. New planting proposals may be shown within a Plan, but the area will not attract WPG. Applications for planting under EWGS will require a separate application and approval in due course.
- WPG is eligible where an approved management plan template is used to replace existing management plan formats due for renewal, such as Forest Plans and Native Woodland Plans. WPG is also eligible where an existing management plan does not meet UKWA Standard, or where significant forest change has occurred resulting in new objectives being required.
- The final Plan must contain and clearly present all the information required in the FC's Management Plan template, or use an alternative FC approved format.

Situations not eligible for Woodland Planning Grant

- WPG will not be payable where a management plan has already been funded and only minor changes are required to meet the current standard.
- WPG will not be payable where a property is currently, or has been, certified to the UKWA Standard.

The FC may, however, consider paying the grant at the normal five-year time of renewal of the certificate, where the applicant is seeking re-certification and the existing Plan clearly fails to meet the requirements of the UKWA Standard.

Grant

The grant rates for WPG in all regions of England are as follows:

Area of woodland on the property	Total grant (minimum payment £1000)
First 100 ha	£20 per hectare
Any additional area over 100 ha	£10 per hectare

Area for grant calculation purposes

The amount of WPG payable will be calculated on the entire area of woodland on the property, **unless** more than 20% of this area comprises newly created woodland under 10 years old at the time of the application. In these cases WPG will be calculated on the area of the older woodland only.

Felled areas that have been recently restocked are not treated as newly created woodland for this purpose. You are asked to detail the area (ha) of woodland less than 10 years of age on the WPG application form.

Demonstrating legal and sustainable timber supply

In England there are 2 main ways that a woodland owner can assure timber buyers and users that wood and wood products come from a legally and sustainably managed source – either through the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (also called ‘Category A’), or the ‘Category B’ route which is based on an approved EWGS WPG management plan.

UK Woodland Assurance Standard

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the United Kingdom. This ‘Category A’ approach reflects the requirements of the governmental UK Forestry Standard and through this, the guidelines adopted by European Forestry Ministers at Helsinki in 1993 and Lisbon in 1998.

UKWAS is designed to provide a single common standard for use within those forest certification programmes operated in the UK by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Programmes (PEFC).

Full conformance with the certification standard is voluntary, but an independent third-party evaluation by an accredited certification authority (also known as a ‘certification body’ or ‘certifier’) is necessary to confirm conformance and thereby obtain a certificate. For further information on UKWAS, or to download the standard see www.ukwas.org.uk.

Government timber procurement contracts

Woodland owners in England intending to supply timber from English woodlands into a Government timber procurement contract will need to demonstrate the legality and sustainability of any timber being supplied to that contract. The EWGS WPG ‘Category B’ option links an approved management plan with subsequent felling permissions, thereby providing that evidence.

‘Category B’ is open to owners with uncertified woodland of more than 3 and less than 100 hectares. It is envisaged that owners with more than 100 hectares will pursue the ‘Category A’ full certification option if they wish to supply any timber through a Government contract.

More information on the Government Timber Procurement Policy can be found in **EWGS Operations Note 22**.

Making an application

Before preparing an application, we recommend you check with your local FC office that there is still funding available for the proposed management plan. If funds are already fully subscribed, this will avoid wasted time preparing an application.

Before submitting a WPG application, it is particularly important that all woodland entered on the application form is already recorded on the Rural Land Register (RLR). This will prevent delays in accepting and processing the application.

Application forms are available on the FC website www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs or from FC offices.

The applicant will need to complete forms **EWGS 1** and **EWGS 2** and provide an Ordnance Survey MasterMap® showing the boundary of all the woodland on the property, and the boundary of any young woodland that is not eligible for grant (see ‘Area for grant calculation purposes’ above).

Please note: On **EWGS 1**, applicants will need to tick ‘Yes’ on question 11 to indicate that they want to use WPG for the Category B option.

On **EWGS 2**, applicants will need to include the following information:

- The total area of woodland on the property, regardless of age or species;
- The area for woodland less than 10 years of age;
- Grant rates being claimed, and the financial year in which your claim will be made.
Bear in mind that site assessment is best done in summer months and this may impact on your claim year choice.

The FC cannot accept maps that are not Ordnance Survey MasterMap®. Base maps of the required quality can be obtained free of charge from the Forestry Commission by completing a Map Request form. This request form is available on the FC website at www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs.

Grant will not be payable where a Plan (or a requirement to have a Plan) already exists.

Producing the management plan

Applicants must first submit an application for grant as set out above. If accepted, the FC will make a grant offer and agree a contract that sets out the expected timescale, claim timetable and the area (ha) over which the grant will be calculated.

The applicant will use the agreed period to complete the information gathering, undertake any surveys, draft the Plan and submit it for FC review and approval prior to claiming the WPG.

Obtaining existing information

Applicants intending to prepare a Woodland Management Plan will be expected to source and collate information that already exists about all the woodland on the property.

The information needs for each applicant will vary but the detail included in the plan should be in line with the scale, complexity and sensitivity of the woodland and consider the potential for damage arising from proposed and future management operations. The FC’s **Woodland Management Plan guidance** document gives an indication of the level of information required to satisfactorily complete the plan.

Spatial information held by the Forestry Commission about designations and known sensitivities is available free of charge through the Land Information Search (LIS), accessible at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-lis. FC staff will guide you to other sources of information where possible.

NB: Applicants may have to pay other organisations to obtain some data or research / survey work in order to provide the information required in a comprehensive management plan.

Using a Management Plan template

A Woodland Management Plan template has been developed by the FC in conjunction with certifying bodies to help ensure it meets certification requirements. This template is the FC’s preferred management plan format.

However, if you intend to use an alternative management plan template, you should highlight this on your application and we will determine whether it is an acceptable format to be offered grant. An alternative template must contain and clearly present all the information required in the FC’s template.

The FC management plan template and guidance is free for anyone to use, irrespective of whether Woodland Planning Grant is sought. However, please note the free map service is only available if you are applying for FC grants or a felling license.

THE FC MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE AND GUIDANCE

The template and guidance should be carefully followed to aid production of a good management plan and to ensure we can pay the grant. Most of the template will need to be completed by everyone but there are a few sections that are not compulsory:

- You should only complete **Section 10, Table A** if you want to use the plan to gain Wood Fuel WIG support or seek funding through other wood fuel initiatives.
- You should only complete **Section 10, Table B** if you want to gain 10 year thinning and felling approval and/or meet the requirements of 'Category B'.

The FC Management Plan template is available as a Microsoft Word 2003 document. The template, including full guidance on completion and example plans, is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg.

Approval and use of the Plan

Applicants must present a draft management plan to the FC for review by December of the claim year we have agreed grant payment. The FC may return the draft plan with questions regarding its content, or to make suggestions on changes needed to meet the standards required.

Only once suitable changes are agreed, and when the management plan meets the required standards, will the FC will approve the plan and approve WPG payment.

Management Plan and 10 year felling approval

If **Section 10 B** of the management plan template has been completed showing proposals for thinning or felling operations, the FC will register these proposals as a new EWGS application and process as usual.

These thinning and felling proposals will be linked to the WPG management plan and, once processed, will be approved for 10 years. They are issued in accordance with the Forestry Act. Therefore the landowner will have to comply with any conditions (including restocking). Failure to meet the conditions may result in prosecution and grant reclaim.

Category B option

Where the applicant has ticked the Category B option in their WPG application, the FC will link the WPG agreement to a new EWGS contract for felling and thinning. This will provide 'Category B' evidence that timber is being produced from a legal and sustainable source.

The 'Category B' thinning and felling permission will be issued for a period of 10 years from the EWGS approval date.

Use of the approved Plan

Applicants will be free to use the Plan to support any other application for grant support or to attain certified status if they wish. The FC will use the Plan to help determine further applications for other grants or future felling proposals.

Restocking grants may be approved with the Plan for up to 2 years ahead. In most cases, separate applications for thinning and felling permissions are issued for 5 years.

When the WPG has been paid, the Plan will be public information. The FC will retain a copy and may make it (or information about it) publicly available or available to specific legitimate interests.

Claims and payments

Applicants must claim WPG using the EWGS 8 Claim Form as soon as the FC has approved the final Plan.

Changes to claim year are subject to Operations Note 7 – Grant Budget Management Policy, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments. The FC cannot guarantee your amendment will be approved as it is subject to grant rules and funding availability.

Grant will be paid in one instalment upon satisfactory completion of the Plan. Once payment is made there are no further contractual obligations on the applicant.

However, if it is discovered within 5 years of the payment that the application or the Plan did not include known and essential information, then the FC may reclaim the Woodland Planning Grant in its entirety and with interest. Similarly if it is discovered within 5 years of the payment that facts pertinent to the eligibility or intended purpose of the grant (or pertinent to any other grant or permission approved as a result) were knowingly or materially misrepresented in the application or the Plan, then the FC may reclaim the Woodland Planning Grant in its entirety and with interest.

Getting help

The FC will offer advice and help you come to decisions about your options and opportunities for woodland management, but cannot help you draw up your application. The application forms and guidance are available from www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg.

Further advice

The Forestry Commission website contains all of the information regarding EWGS and the forms needed to apply, particularly:

- www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs – EWGS homepage;
- www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments – EWGS document library;
- www.forestry.gov.uk/england-lis – The Land Information Search tool, telling you about special designations, features and other grant schemes that are displayed in map form;
- www.forestry.gov.uk/england-grants – FC England Grants and Regulations homepage. This provides links to all aspects of woodland regulations, grants available and public registers of felling/planting proposals.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can request any of the information from your local Forestry Commission office. We also recommend getting professional advice on woodland management and grants. A number of relevant national and regional professional organisations are listed at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-advice or available from your local FC office.

This document is for information only and does not constitute an agreement of any form nor does it confer any rights. It is intended as a guide to help applicants decide whether the grant is applicable to them and whether the main requirements of any grant agreement can be met. The information is subject to change. Full and current details of the grant scheme and the requirements of any EWGS grant contract that may be made between the applicant(s) and the Forestry Commission arising from an application to the grant scheme can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs