

Detailed guide: Woodland Creation Planning Grant

Landowners, land managers and public bodies (excluding Crown bodies and non-departmental public bodies) can apply to the Forestry Commission to support large-scale, multi-purpose productive woodland creation under the Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG). This is part of the Forestry Innovation Fund, along with the [Woodland Research and Development Grant \(RDG\)](#).

You can apply for £1,000 to complete a stage 1 checklist. This is a desk-based exercise to identify constraints and opportunities for proposed planting. If there's potential for woodland creation to take place on the site then you'll be offered a stage 2 payment. At stage 2, you can get £150 per hectare to produce a woodland creation design plan, minus the £1,000 offered at stage 1. You may get additional payments for survey work.

The total amount of funding is capped at £30,000 per project.

Find out if you're eligible

If you've already applied for Countryside Stewardship or the Woodland Carbon Fund, or submitted an EIA enquiry form to plant a new woodland, you're not eligible to apply for WCPG on that site.

You must plan to create woodland that is:

- 10 hectares or more, with potential to benefit the forestry sector in the long-term through production of timber or other wood products
- 10 hectares or more, with any additional blocks of at least 5 hectares

This means that if your application is for woodland less than 15 hectares in total, it must be a single woodland block. The Forestry Commission accepts applications that span multiple land holdings, though only for land in England.

You can include up to 20% of designed open space in your plan.

Tree species and forestry types

At least 70% of the species in your proposed woodland must be productive, including:

- minimum general yield class (GYC) 6 – broadleaves
- GYC10 – pine

- GYC12 – other conifers

Biodiversity, habitats and the environment

Existing native, semi-natural habitats are likely to have a high value for biodiversity, and for landscape and visual interest. This will need to be compared with the value of new woodland. The Forestry Commission does not support the conversion of priority habitats, such as deep peat or active raised bogs.

Where the proposed planting is on semi-natural habitat, the presumption is that the planting will be restricted to native broadleaved species or retained as open ground adding to the forest mosaic.

Find out more about [woodland species and habitats protection](#).

How it works

The funding will support you to gather and analyse the information that you need to make sure your proposal takes into account:

- biodiversity
- landscape
- water
- historic environment
- local stakeholders

You'll have to develop a [UK Forestry Standard](#)-compliant plan for woodland creation that shows any constraints and opportunities.

If your land is already under an existing grant agreement then your woodland creation plan must cover the impact of tree planting on that agreement.

You'll receive payments in 2 stages and possibly extraordinary payments (see below).

Stage 1

You must not start work on the stage 1 checklist until you have a signed agreement with the Forestry Commission in place.

Stage 1 is a desk-based exercise to complete a checklist identifying constraints and opportunities for the site. If the Forestry Commission decide there's potential for planting woodland on the proposed site then you'll be offered a stage 2 payment.

Compile your data using a [WCPG stage 1 checklist](#)
(MS Word Document, 147KB)

and give supporting documents, including at least one map. You must identify

any constraints on the site.

Stage 2

You get a stage 2 payment for producing a woodland creation design plan by completing the template provided. You will find a list of required maps and plans on the first page of the template. This includes:

- a site context map
- a site appraisal plan
- a design concept plan and final design plan

Download the

[WCPG stage 2 template](#)

(MS Word Document, 230KB)

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The Forestry Commission makes the stage 2 payment on approval of your submitted stage 2 documentation.

Note: Forestry Commission approval of your woodland creation design plan does not provide approval to plant. If you wish to plant the woodland then it will still be subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 and consultation. [Find out more about EIAs.](#)

Extraordinary payments

If your stage 1 data indicates that a more detailed assessment is needed (such as a landscape and visual impact assessment, or an archaeological survey) then you can apply for an 'extraordinary payment'.

Complete the

[extraordinary payments application form](#)

(PDF, 137KB, 6 pages)

. You should submit this with a completed stage 1 checklist. If the stage 1 checklist indicates that there's potential for productive multi-purpose woodland at the site then you will get an offer of stage 2 funding, including any extraordinary payments where relevant.

State aid rules

The WCPG operates under the EU state aid de minimis regulation. This means you can receive a maximum of €200,000 (~£140,000) over 3 financial years. As part of the application process, you'll need to declare the amount of de minimis aid received during the current and previous 2 financial years, and consider how a WCPG will add to this amount. [Find out more about state aid.](#)

How to apply

You can apply year-round. The Forestry Commission aims to respond to your application within 10 working days.

You'll need the landowner's consent and signature if you don't own the land, and the Forestry Commission may ask to see your tenancy agreement to confirm your land management responsibilities.

In part 2 of the application form (below), you'll need to outline your planting proposals, and the Forestry Commission may contact you to finalise some details.

Submit an application form

Complete the [application form](#) and return it to the grant scheme administrator: WCPG@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

If you can't apply by email, send hard copies to:

Woodland Creation Planning Grant – WCPG

Forestry Commission

National Office, England

620 Bristol Business Park

Coldharbour Lane

Bristol, BS16 1EJ

Give consent if you appoint an agent

If you decide to appoint an agent to apply for funding on your behalf then you must [complete a form to give your consent](#).

This is not the same form that you would complete to appoint an agent to apply for Countryside Stewardship: woodland support.

Further funding

Once you have a completed and approved woodland creation design plan, you can use this to apply for:

- [Woodland Carbon Fund](#)
- [Countryside Stewardship: woodland support](#)
- HS2 Woodland Fund

Appeals

You can [appeal against a Forestry Commission decision](#).

Contact the Forestry Commission (England)

Contact the Forestry Innovation Fund team for more information:

WCPG@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Research

The research agency of the Forestry Commission offer a range of services that will [help with pest and disease control](#), and also offer resources such as [publications, statistics and datasets](#).

[Detailed guide: Woodland owners: tax planning](#)

To preserve and protect national heritage for the benefit of the public, the government introduced the 'Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme'. This offers landowners – including owners of woodland sites – conditional exemption from Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax, providing certain criteria are met.

Buildings, land (including woodland), works of art and other objects that qualify under the scheme might be exempt from Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax. These property types are called 'heritage properties' by HMRC.

Find out if you're eligible

To be eligible you have to own ancient semi-natural woodlands – which are, or could be, included on the inventories of Ancient Woodland kept by Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. HMRC will consider your case for conditional exemption from capital taxes based on scientific, scenic or historic value.

If you own other woodlands on ancient woodland sites, such as new plantations, you might qualify for tax relief if your site satisfies the criteria relating to land of outstanding scenic or historic interest.

Find further information in the HMRC publication on [capital taxation and tax-exempt heritage assets](#). Sections 5.7 and 5.8 in chapter 5 of this document explain how woodlands might qualify for tax exemptions.

Capital Gains Tax

A growing timber crop is exempt from Capital Gains Tax (but not the land it grows on), where managed as a commercial investment. [Find out more in HMRC's capital gains manual.](#)

Income Tax

Income from the sale of timber from the ownership of commercial woodlands is exempt from both income and corporation tax. [Find out more in HMRC's business manual.](#)

Stewardship agreements and the Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme

If your land is currently under either Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship schemes with Natural England, your grants may be affected by the Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme.

Find out more about:

- [Environmental Stewardship for heritage properties](#) – how Environmental Stewardship grants apply to land that is exempt from Inheritance Tax as a heritage property
- [Countryside Stewardship for heritage properties](#) – your options and which capital items are available on land exempt from Inheritance Tax as a heritage property

Find more information on:

- [Inheritance Tax](#)
- [Capital Gains Tax](#)

[Detailed guide: Cross-compliance for woodland owners and managers](#)

For clarification by the Forestry Commission on cross-compliance and how it affects you as a woodland owner or manager, read [Cross-compliance](#)

[requirements for forests/woodland: operations note 38](#). This gives you information on:

- cross-compliance in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) programme 2014 to 2020 for woodland (forest)
- the two separate sets of standards – specific requirements relating to European Regulations, known as ‘Statutory Management Requirements’ (SMRs) and standards for ‘Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition’ (GAEC) of land
- when and how you need to comply with cross-compliance rules
- which woodland schemes and payments are affected
- breaches and sanctions
- exemptions and derogations

Read broader guidance for farmers and landowners on how you must [follow cross-compliance rules](#) from 1 January 2018 if you claim for the [Basic Payment Scheme \(BPS\)](#), a Countryside Stewardship scheme or the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS).

Find out more about about [Countryside Stewardship and woodland support](#).

[Detailed guide: The Woodland Carbon Code scheme for buyers and landowners](#)

Background

The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) is the UK’s voluntary carbon standard for woodland creation projects. It provides reassurance about the carbon savings that woodland projects may realistically achieve. This government-led scheme provides:

- a high quality, robust voluntary carbon standard
- a transparent UK Woodland Carbon Registry
- robust science to predict and monitor carbon sequestration
- independent validation and verification of projects

This means that:

- carbon buyers have reassurance that they have invested in a responsible scheme and can see the benefits that will be provided
- project developers have recognised procedures and standards to work to, both in terms of woodland management and carbon accounting

Information if you're buying carbon

Woodland Carbon Units from verified WCC projects can help a company compensate for their unavoidable emissions. Projects provide a whole host of benefits for water, biodiversity, communities and the economy as well as sequestering carbon.

Read [WCC guidance](#) on:

- what are Woodland Carbon Units
- why buy WCC-verified carbon units
- where to buy WCC-verified carbon units
- what other companies say

See the [UK Government's Environmental Reporting Guidelines](#), which set out how a company should report their greenhouse gas emissions, and the pamphlet, [Woodland carbon units: buyer's guide](#).

(PDF, 1.89MB, 2 pages)

Case studies

See [examples of buyers who have purchased Woodland Carbon Units](#).

Information if you're a landowner

The WCC is the UK's voluntary carbon standard for woodland creation projects. If you demonstrate that you meet this standard, you can sell the carbon sequestered in your woodland in the form of Woodland Carbon Units.

See the pamphlet, [Woodland landowner's guide to the WCC](#).

(PDF, 225KB, 2 pages)

See [the steps involved if you are a landowner with a woodland creation project](#), including how to:

- find a project developer
- register your project
- get validated (have your project checked at the outset)
- stay verified (have your project checked to show progress)

The WCC and other grant and funding schemes

If you apply for registration with the WCC you are not excluded from applying for Forestry Commission grant and funding schemes:

Find out about your eligibility for:

- [Woodland Carbon Fund](#)

- [Countryside Stewardship: woodland support](#)
- [Woodland Creation Planning Grants](#)
- [Woodland Research and Development Grant](#)
- HS2 Woodland Fund

Case studies

See [examples of WCC projects](#).

The UK Woodland Carbon Registry

The [UK Woodland Carbon Registry](#) holds details of WCC projects, and tracks the issuance, ownership and use of carbon credits. You can use it to look up a project or to see who has purchased carbon units from WCC projects.

Woodland Carbon Code contact details

Email enquiries: climatechange@forestry.gov.uk

Find [regional contact details for the WCC team](#), nationally and regionally.

[Detailed guide: Woodland Research and Development Grant](#)

Organisations and businesses intending to innovate and develop new processes or technologies for the forestry sector in England can apply to the Forestry Commission for this grant, which is part of the Forestry Innovation Fund, along with the [Woodland Creation Planning Grant \(WCPG\)](#).

The Research and Development Grant (RDG) is a one-off grant that funds a maximum of 6 projects up to a total cost of £50,000 each.

The RDG is now closed for new applications.

How it works

Stage 1

You need to submit an expression of interest containing details of your proposed project, outlining:

- what's innovative about your project – this can be at the global level, so completely unique, or it can apply developments from a different sector or country to benefit UK forestry, and may include an element of

original research

- how it fits with the objectives of the scheme (to target opportunities for significant changes in productivity and substantial potential to encourage growth in any part of the forestry sector)

The first stage will ensure proposals are eligible and within scope of the fund.

You can no longer submit an expression of interest for funding in 2018. If the Forestry Commission invited you to make a full application you must have done so by 1 June 2018.

Stage 2

When the Forestry Commission has assessed expressions of interest, it may invite you to submit a full application.

You need to outline the:

- need, challenge or opportunity behind your innovation
- approach you intend to take, including the focus of the innovation
- project team and their roles
- target market
- possible impact of the project outside the project team
- management plans
- main risks
- planned impact of an injection of public funding on the project
- costs and how the project represents value for money for the team and the taxpayer

You need to give full:

- project costs
- organisational details
- funding details for each organisation involved (if this applies)

You will have been notified of the RDG funding decision by 6 July 2018. If you were successful then you must complete the project within 9 months, and by 31 March 2019.

Payments and claim forms

If you're successful, you'll be sent a claim form with your agreement. Payments can be made in 2 instalments. You can claim the first instalment for half of the funding when the project is at the halfway point. You can claim the second (final) instalment for the remaining half of the funding on completion.

You must submit the final claim before 31 March 2019 with evidence of

expenditure, as set out on the claim form.

Contact the Forestry Commission

Contact the Forestry Innovation Fund team for more information:

rdg@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Find out how to make a [complaint or appeal](#).

Forest Research

The research agency of the Forestry Commission offers a range of services to [help with pest and disease control](#), and also offers resources such as [publications, statistics and datasets](#).