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BETTER
WOODLANDS
FOR WALES

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Grants and support for creating
and improving woodlands

Approach to Economic Issues

Introduction

The commercial aspects of managing woodland are of primary importance to many woodland owners who need to generate revenue from their woodlands to cover management costs and provide an income or return from their investment. Commercial issues generally relate to timber production but can also include non-timber forest products such as seed and foliage, as well as opportunities for generating income from sport and recreation.

Economic issues are an integral part of sustainability. The Wales Woodland Strategy recognises this and also the importance of the timber sector in Wales. It also places an emphasis on good woodland management and the production of quality timber. Therefore, Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW) seeks to promote sustainable woodland management and support the commercial forestry sector so that they can provide benefits such as quality timber.

In addition, owners may want to ensure that they can access markets for timber and other products, such as venison, by securing certification for their woodlands which confirms that their products come from well managed woodlands. In order to secure certification, owners must comply with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). BWW can help owners gain certification.

The purpose of this document is to provide woodland owners, Management Planners, and Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) staff with an overview of the way in which BWW takes economic issues into account.

Definitions

The **UK Forest Standard** (UKFS) outlines the government's approach to sustainable forestry. The **UK Woodland Assurance Standard** (UKWAS) is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable forest and woodland management in the United Kingdom. Woodland owners can achieve certification for their woodlands if they gain independent verification that they are complying with the standard.



BWW Approach to Economic Issues

BWW will help owners to make their woodlands economically self-sustaining. However, it is not mandatory for owners to follow commercial objectives. Those who do so will be required to undertake commercial activities in a way that meets the requirements of UKFS and UKWAS – see Further Information. This will ensure that the commercial activities are undertaken in a way that does not damage the environmental or social values of the woodland. The following mandatory requirements are taken from UKWAS and apply to all commercial operations within BWW:

- Obtain relevant permissions (Felling Licence, EIA, Planning Permission, etc.)
- Assess and take account of potentially harmful impacts
- Protect special features, such as habitats and archaeological features
- Minimise the impact of woodland operations on the environment
- Comply with the Forest Guidelines
- Keep open any Public Rights of Way
- Exercise sporting rights and other recreational activities without compromising habitat and species requirements.

BWW seeks to improve the economic viability of woodland by supporting long-term investment in infrastructure and silviculture. The scheme recognises that this investment is important if woodlands are to generate income. BWW will also encourage woodland owners to explore the opportunities for adding value to their timber by providing advice on the opportunities to add value for assessing the potential.

All sites, including native woodland and PAWS, are eligible to be considered for grants for timber production and other commercial activities, providing that management complies with the environmental requirements of BWW.

Planning Process

Applicants will indicate whether or not generating income is important to them when the Management Planner prepares the Foundation Plan. If it is, the Planner will ensure that commercial issues are properly considered in the Management Plan. A key part of the Management Plan is the sub compartment map, which includes the crop information needed in order to manage productive woodlands. Silvicultural operations will be specified in the Plan of Operations part of the Management Plan, together with their costs and associated grant aid.

Opportunities to manage plantation stands using systems that avoid clearfelling are evaluated by means of a Continuous Cover Forestry assessment. Where an owner expresses interest in adding value to timber that is produced from their woodland, a Value Adding assessment will be grant aided as part of the plan in order to help the owner to consider their options and make decisions.

The Planner will identify any adverse impacts on the woodlands from sporting use and recommend any changes required in order to comply with Game Conservancy Trust guidelines. Compliance with those guidelines is a mandatory part of BWW.

BWW Grants for Economic Issues

A wide range of grants are available to help manage woodlands with the objective of generating an economic return. The grant structure recognises that many silvicultural operations, such as thinning generate environmental benefits and higher rates of grant are available for those operations that generate the highest environmental benefits.

- Planting grants encourage the establishment of well stocked, productive crops. The use of mixtures is encouraged in order to improve diversity at stand level and provide more silvicultural options in the future.
- Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG) are available under the heading of Silvi Environmental WIG for a wide range of operations including:
 - Creating infrastructure such as tracks and stacking areas
 - Uneconomic thinning operations in many situations
 - Protecting woodlands from deer and grey squirrels
 - Boundary fencing.

WIG grant rates vary according to the type of operation and the context in which the operation is taking place. Rates of up to 75% are available for high priority operations. The grant rate for replacing stock proof boundary fencing is linked to that available under the Tir Gofal scheme, currently £1.75 /metre.

Most operations for which WIGs are sought will need to be costed. A costing model has been developed to help Management Planners prepare costings for the most common management operations. In situations where uneconomic thinning or felling operations are eligible for grant, the WIG Cost Calculator will calculate the costs and revenues and the grant will be based on a percentage of the Net Cost.

BWW will support work associated with improving woodland infrastructure for operations that add value. This might include improved access for vehicles, stacking or processing areas. The scheme will not grant aid the purchase of machinery or equipment, or the construction of buildings.

FCW will not provide grant towards capital works for the management of game birds; however other woodland operations which may benefit game may be supported if they are consistent with good silvicultural and environmental management.

Owners who wish to generate an income from woodland recreation may be eligible for WIGs, providing that the recreation is open to the general public (and is not restricted to a private club or family). In situations where public access is very important grant rates up to 75% are available for creating infrastructure and ensuring that the woodland is safe. WIG may be available at up to 50% for establishing commercial recreational facilities, however these are looked at on a case by case basis depending upon the nature of the project and the amount of grant aid available.

Further Information

UK Forest Standard
BWW Grant Structure
UKWAS Standard

BWW Approach to CCF
BWW Approach to PAWS
BWW Approach to Deer management
Game Conservancy Trust guidelines
Forest Guidelines
Value Adding Assessment
WIG Rate Tables