



COETIROEDD
GWELL
I GYMRU



BETTER
WOODLANDS
FOR WALES

Grantiau a chymorth
i greu a gwella coetiroedd

Grants and support for creating
and improving woodlands

Approach to Calculating Woodland Improvement Grants

Introduction

Under the old Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) work costs eligible for Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) were negotiated between Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) and the Applicant on a scheme by scheme basis. Although this method provided flexibility in allowing costs to take account of site factors, it also had a number of disadvantages. For example:

- Applicants were not sure how much grant they would receive until their scheme was approved by FCW.
- Negotiations were often protracted and a point of friction between FCW and the Applicant.
- The system was also often perceived by Applicants to be inconsistent.

Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW) provided an opportunity to put in place a new system which maintained some of the flexibility of the old system but addressed the issues above. A steering group consisting of FCW staff, Welsh forestry agents and Coed Cymru representatives have developed a 'WIG Calculator' which will be used on all WIG applications within BWW. The Calculator will allow Management Planners, on behalf of Applicants, to calculate costs during the Management Plan process and be confident that those costs will be approved by FCW.

The purpose of this document is to provide woodland owners, Management Planners and FCW staff with an overview of the way the WIG Calculator will be used.

Definitions

The **Foundation Plan** outlines the key issues associated with a woodland and details the work required to prepare the full Management Plan.

The **WIG Calculator** is a spreadsheet designed to provide cost values for grant-aidable operations, based on criteria selected by the user. It will be submitted to FCW as part of the Management Plan. Once approved, it can be attached to the Management Plan.

BWW Approach to Calculating WIG

FCW wants the calculation and approval of WIG to be straightforward, consistent and transparent. To help ensure this, all WIG calculations will be done using the WIG Calculator except where the Calculator does not provide an option for a particular operation. The Calculator is designed to be flexible and take account of the key factors which affect cost. However, the actual operational costs for any given site are likely to be different from those produced by the Calculator and this is a key principle on which the new system is based.

In most cases where the Management Planner has agreed with the Woodland Officer the need for an operation and the base information to be used for calculating the costs, FCW will accept the cost produced by the Calculator. This will avoid lengthy negotiations and the need to amend operational plans after submission of the Management Plan.

FCW may choose to limit the amount of grant-aid available for work within a particular woodland because they do not feel that approving the grant would be an appropriate use of public funds. For example this might occur in a small woodland that requires high levels of investment in infrastructure but where there is little or no public benefit. The Woodland Officer must make the Management Planner aware of this situation as soon as possible. However, in all cases FCW reserves the right not to approve grant-aid applications.

The costs embedded in the Calculator have been gathered from and tested within Wales. The spreadsheet has been designed to allow periodic review of the costs and it is anticipated that a 6-monthly review will be undertaken involving both FCW staff and representatives from the private sector. Updates will be posted on the FCW website as soon as they are available. It is up to anyone who uses the WIG Calculator to ensure they are using the latest version.

The approval of Management Plans will include the approval of all WIG costs. These costs will therefore run for the duration of the contract and will not be subject to revisions resulting from the 6-monthly review of the Calculator.

Planning Process

All applications for WIG will be based on operation costings from the WIG Calculator. The FCW Woodland Officer will check the calculations to ensure that the base information used (e.g. terrain, vegetation size, type of track, harvesting system etc) are accurate. The Woodland Officer and Management Planner must agree in outline during the preparation of the Management Plan which operations are eligible for grant-aid and what base information will be used to calculate the costs. In this way, when the Management Plan is submitted the Woodland Officer's input should be limited to checking to ensure that the correct data has been used. There should be no need at this stage to negotiate costs.

There may be operations which are eligible for WIG but which are not covered by the Calculator. In these instances the Management Planner and Woodland Officer will either agree on a similar operation that is included within the Calculator and cost will be calculated as normal or cost will be negotiated.

If operational changes are required after the plan has been formally approved by FCW, Management Planners will be required to submit an amendment. The amendment will be re-calculated using the latest version of the Calculator, the old work deleted and the changed work added. As before, any basic site or crop details will need to be agreed with the Woodland Officer prior to the amended spreadsheet being submitted.

BWW Grants

The WIG Calculator has grouped operations under the following headings:

- **Tracks** - includes the creation and upgrade of forest infrastructure.
- **Vegetation Control** - covering all aspects of vegetation management through both chemical and mechanical methods.
- **Harvesting** - for uneconomic thinning and felling operations.
- **Forest Management** - this will include fencing work, pruning, crop protection and monitoring.
- **Social** - works involved with the management of permissive access (signs, furniture, letter etc).
- **Environment and Conservation** - work towards improving the quality of the forest environment.

Woodland Improvement Grants will pay at three levels; 25%, 50% and 75%, depending on the type of work and the location. The level of funding is laid out within the Woodland Improvement Grant Guide.

Further Information

BWW Grant Structure
BWW How to use the WIG Calculator
BWW A Guide for Woodland Owners
Woodland Improvement Grant Guide