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WOODLANDS
FOR WALES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 3 September 2006



BWW launched by Minister at the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells



Editors Note

Welcome to the third edition of the BWW Newsletter. In this edition we go on the road with BWW, featuring the ministerial launch of the new grant scheme at the Royal Welsh Show. We take a look at the progress of BWW since it was opened to management planners in March of this year and following on from our report in April's newsletter, we provide you with updates on the WIG Cost Calculator. Important contact details have been provided towards the end of this issue so please read on.

Minister Launches Ambitious and Innovative Woodland Grant Scheme

Eagerly awaited by all in the forestry, environmental and farming sectors, the launch of Forestry Commission Wales's (FCW) new grant scheme was hailed by a leading figure in countryside as 'the most significant day for woodland owners since the introduction of the woodland strategy'.

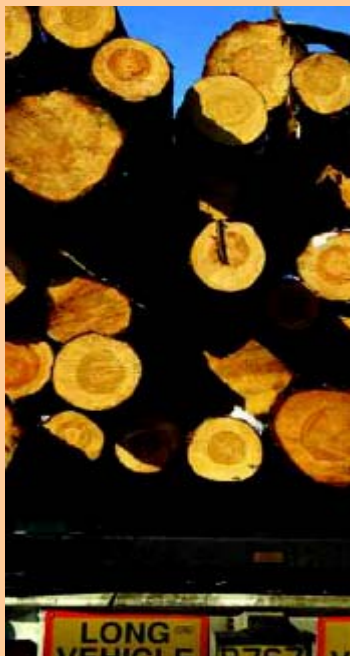
Forestry day at this year's Royal Welsh Agricultural Show saw Carwyn Jones AM launch the scheme – Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW). Speaking at the Confederation of Forest Industries (ConFor) marquee Mr Jones, Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, described the new grant scheme as 'ambitious and innovative'. When referring to the way in which FCW has worked along side the forestry industry, the private sector and other public sector bodies in the development of the scheme he remarked that it was an 'excellent example of joined-up government'.

He went on to say that 'by relating grant aid to specific operations it will not only ensure that BWW generates action and employment but it will also be very clear about what BWW is delivering. I welcome this transparency and I look forward to seeing the evidence that the scheme is making woodlands better for Wales'.

Director of FCW, Ian Forshaw, praised Commission staff, members of steering groups, and various public bodies for their hard work, saying 'it is the input of all these people, working together in partnership, that has resulted in this new grant scheme'.

BWW was designed with the requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) in mind, making it easier and cheaper for woodland owners to secure certification if they so wish. In providing a clear framework of support that will enable owners to meet the challenges associated with creating and managing sustainable woodlands in the 21st century, it is envisaged that BWW will be used as the mainstay for woodland management for many years to come.

**Award goes to
the first
Management
Planner to get a
plan approved**



First Management Plan Approved

When this newsletter last went to press, only 36 planners had received official training. Of these, only a handful actually went on to create an application. We posed the question ‘who would be the first to get a management plan approved?’

Presented with a certificate at the Royal Welsh Show by Carwyn Jones AM, Graham Heath became the first woodland owner to bring a wood into BWW. Work operations outlined within the Management Plan for Ty Hen, near Lampeter, Ceredigion, strive towards achieving objectives set out in the long-term vision for the site. The aim is to improve the biodiversity of the woodland through transformation to continuous cover management, whilst also producing high quality timber.

Carwyn Jones said that he hoped that the work would enable Mr Heath to make long lasting improvements to his woodland and at the same time encourage other woodland owners to follow his example.

WIG Costing Calculator

Many of you will be asking where the final version of the WIG Cost Calculator is, and also wondering why everything’s gone quiet. The early August launch date for the Calculator was postponed to allow further testing. This has resulted in refinements to the Calculator which will save time in the long-term.

Greg Vickers, the G&L Operations Manager said ‘FCW wants Planners and Woodland Officers to have confidence in the Calculator and so it’s important that we spend time now and ensure that it’s right. The working group has done an excellent job of producing a tool that will save us all time in future. Woodland Officers and Planners will be able to agree work specifications and then allow the Calculator to calculate the rate with confidence. Planners will be able to provide work costs to applicants with confidence, and Woodland Officers and Planners will avoid lengthy cost negotiations’.

An interim version of the Calculator is available if you need to get on and start calculating costs now - please contact the Technical Services Team for a copy. Otherwise the final version will be launched at the end of September. FCW realises that this is an important element of the new scheme and is grateful for the patience shown by Planners and others who are waiting for the Calculator.

Woodland Ecologist Applications

Some applicants for the role of Woodland Ecologist will have their skills assessed in the field during September. The candidates were notified at the end of last year that they would have to attend an assessment. They have been contacted again recently and offered dates for the assessment. If you were expecting to be invited to be assessed in the field but haven’t received an invitation then please contact Rhian Corlett in the Technical Services Team – contact details below.

Web site Review

FCW has recently completed the first part of a review of the Grants and Licences part of the FCW web site. In future the web will be a key method of providing information to Planners, Specialists and Applicants. The review is aimed at ensuring that the web site provides the correct information in an appropriate format. The review will be complete and changes made by Christmas.

**An interim version of
the WIG Costing
Calculator is now
available – contact
the Technical
Services Team for
your copy**





96 applications received by FCW since the launch of the system in March 2006



FCW hope to announce new planting grant aid proposals early in the New Year

Update on BWW progress

A total of 96 applications, evenly spread throughout Wales, have been received by FCW since the launch of the new system in early 2006. Of these cases, 24 were received as incomplete applications, 53 are at the Foundation Plan Preparation stage, a further 2 have been submitted for FC approval and 1 is awaiting owner's signature. 2 management plans are currently being prepared, with 1 having been formally approved. To date there have been 3 closed cases.

On the technical development side of BWW, the next major release of software for the G&L Online Service is scheduled for the end of September. This next stage of the project will launch the part of the database that will hopefully allow owners or agents to view their cases online and even claim grant. The drop should also allow the cases to be placed automatically on the public register and allow future amendments to be made. There will be further revisions of the system throughout the rest of 2006.

The final piece of the puzzle is nearly in place. Proposals for grant aid for new planting have been drawn up and will be presented to the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Union for final approval during the autumn. We hope to be able to announce these early in the New Year.

Specialist Training

Specialist Assessments are an integral part of the BWW approach and all assessments are to be carried out by fully trained and approved assessors. Unfortunately due to extra resources required for the development of the system, training which was due to take place during August has had to be delayed. We hope to be able to schedule training for October. For further information regarding training contact Andrew Wright (see below for contact details).

We intend to hold a half-day introduction to BWW for Assessors who have not yet been through Management Planner training. Each assessment will then require a full days training. The training sessions are designed to explain what is required from the assessors, how to complete the templates and how to interact with the Management Planner. We will prioritise training based on anticipated uptake within BWW.

Introduction to BWW for Owners/Agents

We aim to hold a workshop later this year for owners and agents who wish to manage their own contracts. This will explain the BWW process from signing contracts on-line to claiming grant and amending contracts. Planners should make owners aware of this workshop. For further information or to be included on the distribution list contact Sam Davies (see below for contact details).

BWW Stakeholder Focus Group

Later this year a BWW Stakeholder Focus Group will be created. Greg Vickers will chair the group and the membership will be made up of a range of people from the industry including Planners, Specialist, Consultees and FCW staff. The group will provide feedback on BWW and help FCW make decisions about the future of the scheme. Further details about the group will be sent out soon.

**“How to”
documents soon
to be available to
help with those
BWW queries**



**Check you're not
missing anything
with our
'Important dates'
section across
page**



Guidance

A series of 'How to' guidance documents will start to be released this week. The first in the series includes 'How to ask for help', 'How to complete an initial application' and 'How to complete a Foundation Plan'. 'How to complete a Management Plan' will be released during early September.

Key note

Early next year we hope to have the full package of grants available. Our next edition, due to come out in the middle of October, will provide you with full updates on the progress of this and many of the other items discussed throughout these issues.

Technical Tip

Information from External Sources (IfES) is an information gathering process undertaken when an application is approved. The information that comes back from the Information Providers (IP) should be used by the Planner in the planning process. IP's vary from scheme to scheme but could include Local Authorities, Countryside Council for Wales and Archaeological Trusts. The IP has a date by which they should reply and if they don't reply in time then in most cases the Planner should carry on with preparing the plan without the comments. Planners should seek advice from the Woodland Officer if they need to. If the Planner feels that information from an IP is important to the plan, e.g. CCW's comments on a SSSI, then they should contact Technical Services and ask them to chase the IP.

Dates to Remember

- Field assessments for the Woodland Ecologist role – 19/20 September
- Specialist Assessor Training – October
- Next major release to G&L Online Service – September
- Planting Grants – to be announced early 2007
- WIG Cost Calculator Launch date - end of September 2006

Contact Details

- General BWW enquiries: Telephone 0845 604 0845 or log on to www.forestry.gov.uk
- Technical queries: Email bww.ts@forestry.gov.uk
- Suggestions for future issues: Email Sam.davies@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- WIG Cost Calculator queries: Email wig.costings@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- Andrew Wright – Telephone: 01873 850060 or Email: andrew.wright@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- Samantha Davies – Telephone: 01873 850060 or Email: sam.davies@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

