

Better woodlands for Wales

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STOP PRESS

NEW PHONE NUMBER

From 23rd November the telephone number for the Forestry Commission Wales contact centre has changed to 0300 068 0300.

All calls to this number are charged at a standard national landline rate even if you are calling from a mobile.

The old number will automatically divert calls for a 3 month period then there will be a message with the new number for a further 3 months.

Next issue July 2010

Current issue and back issues available on the FCW website:
www.forestry.gov.uk/wales

New skills for woodland thrills

Thousands of people visit the woodlands of Wales every year to tackle the growing network of world-class mountain bike trails.

Now FCW is helping riders to prepare themselves for the hundreds of miles of trails throughout Wales by providing the funding for a new skills area where they can test their ability before setting off into the woods.

The skills area was opened in October at the UPM Tilhill-owned Coed Llandegla mountain bike centre near Wrexham thanks to a grant from Better Woodlands for Wales. Management Planner Simon Miller of Tilhill has been putting together a plan featuring four separate skills sections so that riders of all abilities - from beginner to advanced - can experience the thrills, without the spills.

Those new to the sport can learn and practise basic bike techniques, while more experienced riders can tackle the Free Ride area, featuring dirt and built jumps, drops and manmade stunts. The Pump Track teaches riders to maintain and gain speed with the minimum of pedalling and the Dual Slalom pits two riders in a head to head race along berms, jumps and bumps.

Dave Liddy, FC Wales mountain bike adviser, said more and more people were discovering the excitement of mountain biking in the woodlands of Wales.

"Last year, more than 410,000 cyclists visited the world-class biking centres in Wales, bringing millions of pounds into the Welsh economy, but we're keen to encourage those new to the sport to learn and practise bike techniques before they set off into the woods," he said.

"Our woodlands offer fantastic opportunities for recreation and the mountain bike trails demonstrate how large, well-managed forests can provide timber and local jobs as well as a great day out."



"Those new to the sport can learn and practise basic bike techniques"



Important land occupation arrangements for landlords and tenants

The November 2009 issue of Gwlad magazine published an article concerning rules that are now in effect regarding dual use of land. This is where two land managers – usually landlords and tenants – are using the same parcel of land to claim under different Rural Development Plan and Direct Aid schemes at the same time. These rules include Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW).

The European Court of Auditors and the European Commission of rules, has decided that only one person can be in 'management control' for agri-environment schemes and land being 'at your disposal' for SPS on any single land parcel. These rules also apply to BWW because it receives funding under the Rural Development Plan.

The required level of 'management control' might only be achieved where the Claimant is:

- An owner/occupier;
- A tenant, who has 'exclusive occupation' or a full Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 tenancy, neither of which will end in that five year period and, in either case, where there are no conflicting clauses in the tenancy agreement that would conflict with applying to or delivering a BWW agreement; or,
- A licensor, who is a person who grants a licence to a licensee.

These will be the only types of land occupation that will meet the Rural Development schemes, such as BWW, for 'management control', provided you have management control for the duration of the agreement.

Situations where dual use of land rules might affect you as a BWW claimant could be as follows:

- You are the landlord with a BWW agreement, but you have a tenant who claims SPS on the woodlands.

- You are the landlord with a BWW agreement, but you have a tenant who has entered the woodlands into an agri-environment agreement, such as Tir Gofal or Tir Cynnal.

- You are a tenant with a BWW agreement, but you have a landlord who claims SPS on the woodlands.

- You are a tenant with a BWW agreement, but you have a landlord who has entered the woodlands into an agri-environment agreement.

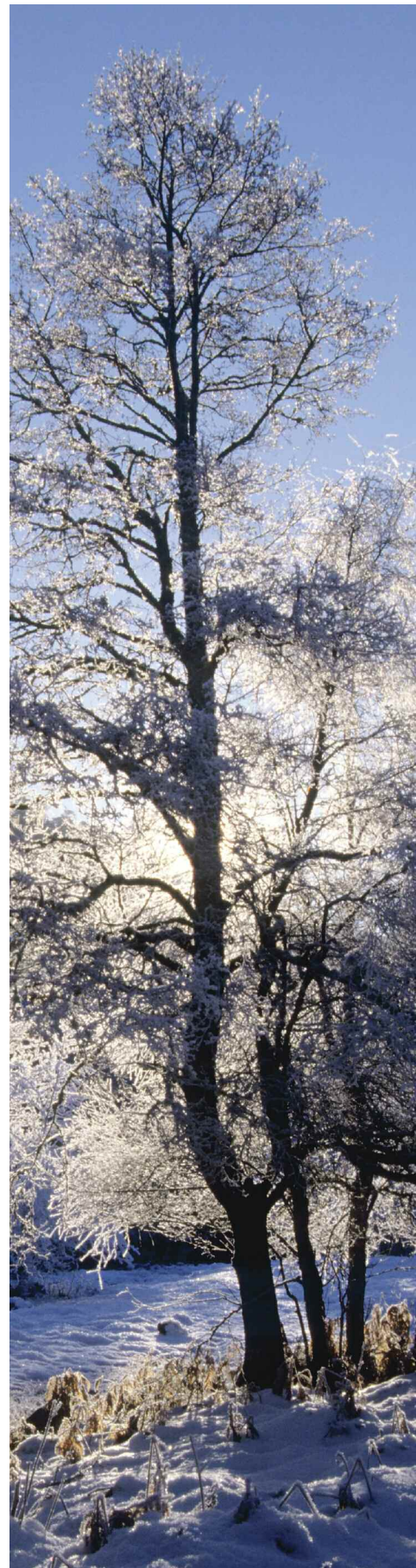
Therefore, it may be necessary to review existing tenancies and licences, adjusting them as needed to ensure that the correct single business is in place to allow it to be the claimant for all associated schemes on that land.

Rural Payments Wales (RPW) will be checking that only one business is claiming for schemes on any single parcel and that they meet the land occupation requirements to be eligible for the schemes. RPW will not accept unwritten agreements as good evidence to show who has either 'management control' of the land or that the land is 'at your disposal'. It would be advisable to seek professional advice to ensure that written agreements for the use and occupation of land have the results that all parties intend, so prospective claimants are eligible and qualify. Failure to ensure you have the correct occupation of the land you claim on could result in significant penalties or exclusions.

If you need to discuss this further please contact Kevin Taylor on 0300 068 0300 thereafter if you have any further queries concerning dual use of land rules.

The full Gwlad article can be obtained from WAG Divisional Offices or downloaded from the WAG website at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environment/countryside/ecnewsevents/gwlad/gwlad2009/gwlad90/?lang=en>



Woodland Improvement Grants for 'Woodlands for Learning'

Over the last 10 years interest in woodland-based learning has increased. The introduction of the Foundation Phase in Wales, an innovative curriculum for 3 to 7 year olds which requires equal access to indoor and outdoor environments and a shift towards practical skills for all ages has meant that more people are seeking robust, safe, stimulating environments in which to learn in and learn about. What better place than a Welsh woodland?

Woodland can be used in a variety of ways both formally and informally, both as a setting and as a resource. One off day visits, volunteering, natural play, Forest School – a programme of visits by the same group to

the same suit led by a qualified Forest School practitioner, delivery of the national curriculum, accredited courses, trails and guided walks. All can take place in an ever changing environment.

The new Wales Woodland strategy contains three key elements:

- To provide access to well-managed woodlands across Wales which are suitable settings to support education, learning and skills delivery and development
- That more people enjoy the life long learning benefits of woodlands and their products

- To facilitate a thriving, skilled workforce in the forestry and woodland sector

BWW presently offers certain funding opportunities through WIG (Woodland Improvement Grants). Two woodlands used for Forest Schools have recently had BWW plans approved. Woods that are to be used for regular learning can benefit from help with additional costs such as start-up equipment.

If you would be interested in providing a site for woodland learning and would like to know more, please contact Sue Williams, Team Leader, FCW Woodlands for Learning Team on 0300 068 0300.



Use of G&L Online service for owners

If you want to follow the progress of your BWW scheme or make a claim on-line once work has been done, you can log on and register on our G&L online service for owners.

The route to registration is via our web site and upon the completion of a simple, one-off registration process, an email will be sent to you confirming a username and password which will enable successful login in to the system at any time that is convenient.



To register, owners or agents can access the FCW web site using the link www.eforestry.gov.uk

Choose The G&L Online Service – to make a grant application online and then select the click here to register option.

You must now use the ID and password to log in to the system and in order to fully activate the account you need to phone or email the Technical Services team and inform them that you have set up as a new user. The team will then attach you as an owner, to your own case and you will be able to view the scheme details in full.

Don't forget if you are having problems with the above procedure just e-mail our Technical Services team bww.ts@forestry.gsi.gov.uk not forgetting to include your telephone number.

Rural Development Plan – Cross axes event at Gregynog Hall

The Rural Development Plan 2007-13 set out four core objectives (axes) for rural development.

Axis 1 Increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector through support for restructuring;

Axis 2 Enhancing the environment and countryside through support for land management (including actions related to Natura 2000 sites);

Axis 3 Enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of economic activities through measures targeting the farm other rural sectors: and

Axis 4 Enhancing the use of the Leader approach which provides a bottom up, community driven approach using local partnerships to inform the implementation of the other three axes.

One of our woodland owners, Ian Jones of Cwm Belan near Llanidloes kindly agreed to talk about his BWW plan which is funded under cross axis 2, at an event held by the RDP in October. Ian spoke to managers and beneficiaries of other agri-environmental schemes, such as Farming Connect and we also had an update on Glastir.

Ian owns a 36 acre small-holding and has been gradually converting his bleak hillside grazing land into a native woodland. "I've been brought up on intensive agriculture and the use of fertilisers, so now I am addressing the balance by putting something back", he said. He has received extra payments for using local stock and being in the top 20 focal network. "My smallholding is too small to support me, but the BWW grant has allowed me to fit in contracting work and planting and maintaining a new woodland for the future" Ian told the audience.



Beauty spot farmer is the first to snap up new woodland grant

A farm owner in one of the most beautiful areas of Wales became the first recipient of a Forestry Commission Wales grant aimed at bringing 12,000 hectares of private woodland into sustainable woodland management over the next 3 years.

Colin Owen, owner of Fairbirch Farm in south Wales, signed up for the new Better Woodlands for Wales Smallwoods grant which targets the type of woodlands found on 90 per cent of Welsh farms.

Colin's farm is nestled in Three Crosses, near Swansea, within the Gower area of outstanding natural beauty, an iconic landscape which attracts millions of tourists to Wales.

The trees on the farm together comprise one of the largest blocks of woodland on the north of the Gower peninsula, making the land an important wildlife habitat as well as a magnet for visitors to the area.

Since buying the farm 25 years ago, Colin has steadily been balancing these considerations while maximising the value of his woods, creating a range of products from luxury floorboards to charcoal crayons for artists' pencils.

Now, he is looking forward to developing his woodland – which he describes as a “from the cradle to the grave” commitment – after being first in line for a Smallwoods grant.

The new grant is a more streamlined offshoot of the FC Wales BWW package and has been designed with farmers very much in mind: over 33,000 hectares of farm woodlands in Wales qualify for a Smallwoods grant.

It's hoped that Colin will be the first of many farmers in Wales to snap up the grant, which offers up to 75 per cent of the cost of managing any woodland of more than 0.25 hectares and less than 20 hectares. Richard Siddons, head of grants and regulation at Forestry Commission Wales, said, “The small

woods of Wales have a critical role to play in creating more woodland cover and bringing more woodlands into sustainable management to help tackle climate change. We are aiming to create an extra 1,500 hectares of new planting by 2012.”

“Many of these woods are found on farms in Wales and we want to encourage farmers and smaller owners to manage their woodlands sustainably and in a way which unlocks the economic potential of these woods.”

The 15-hectare ancient woodland on Fairbirch Farm can be found on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, which means that it has probably been continuously wooded since at least 1600.

However, since the end of World War II, the woods had been mainly neglected, like many small farm woodlands. But over the past 10 years Colin has slowly started managing the land by coppicing, thinning trees and laying tracks to allow access for working the wood.

He has built up a business making floorboards but he plans to use his Smallwoods grant to use more of his own wood, rather than buying in the timber.

Colin will also put in new tracks to allow machinery to extract felled timber, and coppicing of dense hazel and holly will allow more light to hit the forest floor, giving seeds falling from mature trees enough light to grow and encouraging the number of flowering woodland plants.

Nothing goes to waste from the felled trees. He uses the waste to produce charcoal crayons for artists' pencils in his two charcoal burners, using material previously considered to contain no commercial value.

Other suitable left-over material is used to make quirky and unusual pieces of furniture.



“Over 33,000 hectares of farm woodlands in Wales qualify for a Smallwoods grant”

BWW Claim Years

All Better Woodlands for Wales grants have claim years assigned to them when the Management plan is drawn up. The grant must be claimed by 28th February of that claim year. We need to have claim years so that Forestry Commission Wales can manage the grant budget and forecast future requirements.

Please can you ensure that when selecting a claim year at the planning stage, you are realistic about when the work will actually take place. If you are not sure that it will be carried out in the year

proposed then we would recommend that you select a future claim year for your BWW plan.

Although Forestry Commission Wales may allow contract holders to amend claim years because work has not been carried out, we cannot guarantee this and it does create an additional burden of work for all parties – the contract holder, their agent and FCW staff.

Thank you for your co-operation.



Claim outstanding payments on WGS

If you have an old WGS (Woodland Grant Scheme) with outstanding payments still due to you, we will be sending out invitations to claim your grant. This will be for all grant payments which are due to be paid during the life of the scheme. Although we will be paying grant instalments early, WGS contract holders will still have to comply with contract terms and conditions until the end of the contract period.

Complaints Procedure

Management Planners and Specialists have all signed up to a code of Practice. If you are unhappy about the performance of a Planner or a Specialist you should follow the Complaints Process which can be found on the FCW website:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6ldg9t>

Complaints made against a Planner or Specialist will feed into the 'Maintaining Standards' process and action will be taken using the guidance that the process outlines.

Contact details

For general BWW enquiries, telephone:
or log on to:

For, technical queries, email:

For the GLOS Service link:

Suggestions for future issues, email:

0300 068 0300

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