



Better woodlands for Wales

News from Forestry Commission Wales Grants and Regulations, Issue 22, November 2009

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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 an message with the new number for a further 3 months.

New Digital data fees

From 1st December 2009 the Management Planner Digital Data fee will change. It will no longer be a flat rate of £250 per case but will now be a calculated fee depending on number of woodland blocks, sub compartments and size (ha). The fees have been changed to reflect the additional time needed for larger or more complicated cases.

Details of the new fee structure and how to calculate the fees will be published before 1st December. You should use the new criteria to calculate any invoices to be received by FCW on or after 1st December 2009 .

Any questions please contact our Technical Manager martyn.potton@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Issue dates:

Issue 23 January 2010

Issue 24 March 2010

Current issue and back issues available on the FCW website:

www.forestry.gov.uk/wales



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

CRN and Land Registration queries

Our Business and Projects Manager, kevin.taylor@forestry.gsi.gov.uk is now the first point of contact for any queries that you have in relation to dealing with WAG (Welsh Assembly Government) such as obtaining CRNs (Customer Reference numbers), Customer detail forms and Land Registration. Kevin is liaising with WAG in order to improve the process for forestry customers and is also aiming to work with WAG to set up training seminars to help Management Planners to understand this better. We will keep you informed.

Surveying and monitoring squirrels



The Forestry Commission has recently published a practice note, 'Practical Techniques for Surveying and Monitoring Squirrels'. You can download this publication or order a copy from FC publications. To find a copy please type in FCPN011 in the search box of www.forestry.gov.uk/wales

Christmas holidays



The Grants and Regulations office at Clawdd Newydd will be closing on Thursday 24th December and re-opening on Monday 4th January. In addition, some staff will be on annual leave before and after these dates.

New skills area prepares mountain bikers 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."



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.



GLOS Update

We continue to have a long list of changes and fixes that we need to see made to GLOS to ensure that the system is compliant with the Rural Development Plan and works effectively. For FC Wales there are currently 30 changes that we

have requested and approximately 50 fixes. There is a similar list for FC England who also share GLOS and a smaller number for FC Scotland.

The main changes affecting Management Planners are shown below with an expected release date: -

Release date	User	Change	Benefits
Feb 2010	All	Improved contract maps	Clearer detail of where operations are being carried out
	External	Ability to upload data from WIG cost calculator into GLOS	Reduce Planner and Woodland Officers time in checking that the details have been copied correctly
	Internal	Amendments	Improve ability to process amendments which should help speed these up
	Internal	Cross-checking of amendments	Automated cross-check of amendments against other RDP schemes to avoid dual or incompatible funding
July 2010	External	Spatial Linking Tool	Easier for Planners to see what has been linked and where
	All	Improved contract maps	Include constraints maps
	Internal	Amendments	Automatically inform BWW Technical Services when an amendment has been submitted
	Internal	My Work	Improve usability so that staff can process cases more efficiently
No date yet	All	Case renewal	Ability to add a second 5 year plan of operations to an approved BWW Management Plan after the first 5 year plan of operations has expired

The fixes have arisen from various sources – both internally and externally and these range from an inability to make payments through to formatting problems.

We did ask the Development Team to investigate whether it was possible to have a GLOS training system, similar to that used at Management Planner training events, for Planners to practice using GLOS. Unfortunately this is not easily possible because: -

- The system used for Management Planner training is accessed via internal systems and not via the Internet like GLOS.
- This system is also used for GLOS Development so is constantly changing as new pieces of computer code are being developed and tested to meet the changes and fixes that we require. During the training sessions we are able to request that no changes are made to this system for a couple of days but this would not be practical for longer periods of time

To create and maintain a new externally available training system would use considerable resources – both in time and financial - which would delay delivery of the changes and fixes that we already have in the programme. We have therefore decided not to go ahead with this but will be asking the BWW Technical Group if they can look into ways to help Planners who want to consolidate using GLOS.

We use the same criteria to prioritise all of the above changes and fixes which cover the following:-

High – required to maintain legal compliance including compliance with EU regulatory requirements. No manual work around possible.

Medium – required to deliver business efficiency, improved business process, Audit requirement but can be managed by manual workaround in short term but not for long term.

Low - improved business process, manual work around is possible, risk of error is low.

Urgent – Breach of legal requirement, no minimum numbers of users apply. System does not work e.g. not available, wrong grants calculated, claims cannot be made, cases cannot be progressed, no manual work around possible.

Medium term – system works but not as required, a manual work around is required but will not meet Audit requirements, process takes longer than envisaged affecting efficiency. Between 10- 20% of users are likely to be affected.

Longer term – Cosmetic or does not fall into the above categories.

This does mean that some requests that have been raised by Management Planners may take a while to get fixed and where that is the case we will aim to advise of a likely time-scale as soon as we can.

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 0845 604 0845 before 22 November or 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/environmentcountryside/ecnewsevents/gwlad/gwlad2009/gwlad90/?lang=en>

Reminders from the Technical Services Team

Please remember to put your phone number on any emails to the TSO team at bww.ts@forestry.gsi.gov.uk as it speeds up their response to you.

If you are changing the company you work for, please let us know, as it has a knock-on effect on your Framework agreement and digital data contract.

25% income from farming?

In order to certify that an owner receives more than 25% of their income from farming you will be asked to provide a letter from a Chartered Accountant. This must be provided before the plan is approved by FCW.

Working with Tir Gofal officers

Where woodland management is taking place on farms in a Tir Gofal Scheme, the local Tir Gofal Officer should be at least a non compulsory consultee and be sent a copy of the draft management plan for their information and comment. Management Planners are required to provide confirmation from a Tir Gofal officer that there is no double funding on a BWW scheme.

Contact us...

For general BWW enquiries, telephone: 0300 068 0300 or log on to: www.forestry.gov.uk/wales

For technical queries, email: bww.ts@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

For the GLOS Service link: www.eforestry.gov.uk

and with suggestions for future issues, email: alison.evans@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

