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BETTER
WOODLANDS
FOR WALES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 October 2006



**First planting
season under
BWW will be
2007/08**



Editors Note

In this issue we bring you the latest updates on the WIG Cost Calculator, Stakeholder and Technical Groups, and look at the time-scales for new planting under BWW. We also cover consolidation and severance payments and re-affirm the position with existing applications under the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS).

We would welcome your suggestions or feedback concerning this newsletter. If you have anything you would like to see covered or perhaps you think we could do better please use the email address provided below for Sam Davies.

Time-scale for new planting under BWW

In the last newsletter we explained that a new grant structure had been developed and that we hope to be able to announce EU approval for this early in the New Year. This delay and some uncertainty about how the new Improved Land Premium (the successor grants to Farm Woodland Premium Scheme) will be administered, mean that we cannot schedule the development of the new planting grants screens within the IT system until March 2007 at the earliest.

The first planting season in which you will be able to use BWW new planting grants will therefore be 2007/8. If you have created any BWW applications that are for new planting only, you will be unable to complete the plan of operations and grant application until the new planting elements have been developed.

- Q. What do I do if I have a BWW application that includes existing woodlands and new planting and I wish to proceed now with the management of the existing woodlands?
- A. You may choose to continue to plan for the new woodlands in your management plan, (i.e. include them in your application area, objectives and in any consultation) but omit the planting operations from your Plan of Operations.

We will approve the plan and issue the grant contract without the new planting grants. However, once the New Planting screens are available, you will be able to submit an amendment to the Plan of Operations without the need to alter the Management Plan or carry out further consultation.

Customer Reference Numbers (CRN's) are essential for BWW approval



The WIG Costings Calculator is now available – Visit the FC website for your copy at www.forestry.gov.uk



Changes to grant administration

We flagged up in an earlier newsletter that some administrative changes need to take place as a result of new rules governing the 2007-2013 Rural Development Plan for Wales. We have been working with the Rural Payments Division of the Welsh Assembly Government in order to minimise the impact for the forestry sector. However, there will be some changes and the first of these is the requirement for all grant beneficiaries to have a unique Customer Reference Number or CRN.

Before we can approve BWW management plans and issue grant contracts, we must have the CRN for the applicant. This CRN will be linked to a set of payee details to which all grant payments will be directed.

We have prepared a standard letter to BWW applicants explaining this requirement and have taken soundings from the representative bodies. As a result of the comments received, we will not send this directly to the applicants but will leave it to the Management Planners to contact the applicant. A copy of the two page standard letter is attached so that you can either print or email it onwards to your BWW clients or use it as a basis for explaining the need for a CRN.

The registration process is orientated towards farmers. In order to find out if it is confusing or creates problems for woodland owners, we are road-testing it with the help of agents with a range of different clients. If there is a need for any further guidance, we will email this to you in order for you to be able to advise your clients accordingly.

We understand that the requirement for a CRN also applies to WGS contract holders. However, this is a more tricky issue and is generating more discussion with the Assembly. Once we are clear, we will write to you again to explain how we will proceed.

Consolidation and Severance Payments

FCW will pay VAT on Consolidation and Severance Payments.

Launch of WIG Cost Calculator

The new WIG Calculator is now available on the FCW website. This should be used for all BWW applications. FCW will be offering training during November on how to get the best from the WIG Calculator. All Management Planners will be invited to attend these training sessions. There will also be an opportunity for Planners to discuss other BWW issues with FCW staff after the sessions.

Dates: 14th & 29th November – mid-Wales
21st November – north Wales (Clawddnewydd)
22nd November – south Wales (Llandovery)

BWW Stakeholder and Technical Groups

FCW will soon be inviting organisations and individuals to join two new groups. The BWW **Stakeholder Group** will have industry, public and voluntary sector representatives on it, together with FCW staff. The purpose of the group is to enable FCW to provide stakeholder groups with progress reports on BWW, seek their views on key issues and provide them with the opportunity to ask questions about BWW or raise concerns. The group will meet twice yearly. FCW will send out invitations for the Stakeholder Group.

**The cut-off date
for WGS approval
is 31st December
2006**



**Check you're not
missing anything
with our 'Dates to
remember' section
across page**



The **Technical Group** will be made up of Management Planners and FCW staff. The purpose of this group will be to enable those directly involved in the delivery of BWW to identify bottlenecks and technical problems and to identify solutions to resolve them. Solutions may range from developing guidance, identifying training needs or specifying improvements to IT systems. Members of the group may be tasked to undertake work to resolve problems. The group will deal with things that impact on the key measures of performance within BWW such as processing times, the number of Foundation and Management Plans approved or withdrawn, map digitisation and the provision of information from information sources. Changes to the grant structure and rates will be outside the remit of the group. FCW will write out to all Management Planners early in November inviting them to express an interest in joining the Technical Group. FCW will select membership from those that express an interest. The group will meet every two months and membership will be changed every year. Please do not send expressions of interest at this time.

Cut-off for WGS Approval - 31st December 2006

The permission given to FCW under the Rural Development Plan to administer the old Woodland Grant Scheme ends on 31st December 2006. This means that FCW cannot approve schemes after this date regardless of when they were submitted. Many of you will have submitted schemes prior to the 31st August deadline (for submitting new schemes) and FCW has made additional Woodland Officer resource available to process these schemes quickly. However, some schemes may not be processed in time for the 31st December cut-off and FCW will have to automatically close these. We have prioritised new planting schemes and well presented applications that provide all the relevant information to allow quick processing. Some applications contain sketchy information or work that cannot sensibly be done within the claim period ending on 31st March 2007 (e.g. squirrel control). Woodland Officers will find it difficult to approve these in time and may decline the application. Please work with Woodland Officers to get schemes approved in time. FCW will continue to accept amendments to existing approved schemes after the cut-off date.

Key Notes

All grant beneficiaries will need to have a Customer Reference Number – BWW applications will not be approved without one. The attached letter can be emailed or sent to the owners via their management planner to explain the need for a CRN.

Dates to Remember

- Delayed EU approval on new planting grants has meant that the first planting season under BWW will be 2007/08.
- Absolute cut-off date for approving WGS applications is 31st December 2006
- Dates for WIG Cost Calculator Training (you will be invited to attend):
 - 14th & 29th November – mid-Wales
 - 21st November – north Wales (Clawddnewydd)
 - 22nd November – south Wales (Llandovery)

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



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