

Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Name of policy, function or service

Forestry Challenge Funds.

Purpose and aim(s) of the policy, function or service

Forestry Challenge Funds are administered by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) under the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Two funds are available: Woods In and Around Towns, and Forestry for People.

The WIAT Challenge Fund aims to bring urban woodland into sustainable management and improve recreation facilities by carrying out an agreed programme of work.

The funding is targeted at woods within 1 km of settlements with a population of over 2000 people (the WIAT area). The aim is to regenerate the woodland environment close to centres of population, improving the quality of life for people living and working there.

The Forestry for People Challenge Fund covers all Scotland, including the WIAT area. It supports local involvement in woodland projects for health, learning and strengthening communities.

Who will benefit mainly from this policy, function or service?

Anyone in Scotland who wishes to become involved in woodland projects.

Information and Data (evidence) used

The Scottish Government's Scottish Forestry Strategy principles of social inclusion and forestry for and with people are embodied in the Forestry Challenge Funds.

Equality & Diversity considerations for forestry

Forest Research has undertaken a literature review identifying the information available on the different equality strands and the positive impacts of using woodland and the real and perceived barriers they experience in accessing and using woodland.

Summary of Impact

The assessment indicates that the Challenge Funds will have a positive impact on all groups. However, the level of involvement of each equality group in funded projects will be continuously reviewed. Good practice guidance will be developed to ensure any barriers to groups accessing woodland are addressed. Annex 2 explains the potential impacts and indicates where further work is required.

Monitoring/Evaluation

Applicants to the forestry challenge funds will require to submit an annual report on the profile of people involved in their projects including information on equality strands (including social deprivation). This information will be complemented by the Public Opinion Survey of Forestry 2009 that will identify people's background in relation to the different equality groups and their opinions of, and involvement in woodlands.

FCS will review this data annually to determine the impact of the policy on the equality strands and if necessary will review and amend specific delivery mechanisms.

Further Information

The Forestry Challenge Funds are delivery mechanisms for a number of FCS policies and programmes including:

- Woods In and Around Towns
- Working with Communities
- Woods for Health
- Woods for Learning

The first two have already been Equality Impact Assessed and deemed to have a positive impact on all 6-equality strands. The remaining two will be assessed shortly.

Furthermore, extensive consultation with all majority and minority groups will be part of every Challenge Fund application and the few exceptions that don't undertake full consultation will need to be equality impact assessed.