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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

The Newsletter for Participants in Farm Woodland Schemes

Scotland's Finest Woods

The 'Scotland's Finest Woods Awards' contest will not be run this year as part of the Royal Highland Show. It is planned to launch a re-vamped version of the competition in 2006.

Farmland Premium Statistics

In the first nine months of this year SEERAD have received 338 applications for the Farmland Premium scheme. Leading the field are farmers in the Grampian (Thainstone) office area with 76 applications, but the Ayr office area has the largest area applied for at 1160 hectares. So far this year, applications total 4369ha with broadleaves representing 61% of the area.

Did you know...



that a mature oak can produce 50,000 acorns in a year?

Pilot SFGS Stewardship Grant Controlled Livestock Grazing In Woodlands

Do you graze cattle in your woodlands? If so, you may wish to take part in a pilot scheme just announced by the Forestry Commission. Officially, the closing date for expressions of interest is 20th May but we understand that later applications will be considered.

We intend to pilot this new SFGS Stewardship Grant on a limited number of appropriate woodlands throughout Scotland, in order to assess the requirements for providing grant aid to support appropriate levels of livestock grazing in such woodlands.

The woodlands we are looking to include in the pilots will be those where planned and controlled grazing by domestic livestock is most likely to enhance or maintain the existing or future biodiversity within their wooded ecosystems.

We are therefore seeking owners who may wish to have their woodlands considered as a potential pilot for this new SFGS Stewardship Grant.

Successful applicants for the pilots will receive an annual payment of £100 per hectare of controlled grazing, for up to 10 years, as well as either 60% or 90% of standard costs for eligible operations. As part of the pilots owners will need to agree to periodic visits by FCS sanctioned

experts looking to increase understanding as well as providing feedback on progress against the owners' objectives.

If you would like to be considered as an applicant for this pilot, please contact your local FCS conservancy office as soon as possible. Can you also include a map of the area and ideally a photograph showing a typical view of the woodland. We will let you know whether or



More information is needed on the best ways to manage livestock in woodlands

not your outline proposals meet the objectives of the scheme and has been selected as one of the pilots. If so you would be expected to subsequently submit a formal application for this SFGS Stewardship Grant.

Pesticide Labels

New EC regulations mean that you will see a few changes to pesticide labels from now on. Chemicals that may present an immediate or delayed danger to the environment will carry a black on orange image of a dead fish and a dead tree. Labels for toxic, harmful and irritant chemicals will also indicate the levels of chemicals that may cause cancer or heritable genetic defects.

Game Crops

Game Conservancy Trust research has shown that game cover crops support between 5 and 100 times more farmland birds than the equivalent area of arable land. Why not sow some wild bird seed mix in between newly planted trees? A useful mix includes 10% quinoa, 10% kale and 80% cereals.



In The Autumn Edition of Farm Woodland News

- Land Management Contracts in detail
- Woodland Access & Recreation
- Timber Market Update and much, much more.

Contents

Pilot Stewardship Grant

Page 1

Editorial Page 2

Land Management Contracts

Page 2

Riverside Woodlands on the

Farm Page 3

Woodland Management for

Red Squirrels Page 4

Consolidation of Single Farm

Payment Entitlement for New

Woodlands Page 5

Scottish Forestry Grants

Scheme Review Page 6

New Search Tool to find

Information for Your Area

Page 6

Pollarding or How to keep

Your Trees Standing Page 6

Dates for your diary Page 6

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Editorial

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of Farm Woodland News.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the questionnaire in the last edition. For the majority of grant scheme participants, it would appear that this publication is particularly well received and is the only regular contact many of you have with woodland affairs. We received over 160 replies, nearly all of them positive. We are still analysing these in detail and the next edition will incorporate many of the changes you suggested. Meanwhile we hope you find this edition interesting. The lucky winner of the bottle of whisky was Mr H. Campbell, The Sheiling, Melvich and this will be on its way to you shortly.

Particularly encouraging for Scotland's establishing private woodlands is that most of you are truly interested in your woodlands and looking to expand your knowledge on woodland issues. From the positive comments received, it would appear that you look to this publication to help deliver this.

There is an old joke that a farm is a piece of land surrounded by fences, while a croft is a smaller piece of land surrounded by legislation. Increasingly today it feels that a wood is a piece of land surrounded by grants. The latest addition to the range is the Land Management Contract Menu Scheme introduced as part of your IACS application this year. See below for more information.

Land Management Contracts

"Not another woodland grant scheme" you probably said when the LMC Contract Menu Scheme booklet dropped through your letter box recently. Please read on though as this is an attractive scheme for those who wish to carry out some woodland management but do not wish to go into the level of commitment required for the SFGS Stewardship options.

All woodlands that are no longer within a grant scheme contract, i.e. are older than ten years, are eligible.

The first step is to carry out a woodland survey and complete a simple report and management plan. For this there is a minimum

grant of £150; grant is paid at £10/ha with no limit for native woodlands or a 30ha limit for other woods.

For woodland management the payment is £30/ha for five years to implement the work identified in the plan. Again there is a 30ha limit for most woods, but no limit for native woodlands.

In general terms you are required to meet the 'Standard for Sustainable Farm Woodland Management'. This includes the following topics:-

- Management must be in line with the Plan;
- Livestock and wildlife must not significantly damage the

trees or prevent natural regeneration;

- Invasive or non-native species must not be allowed to pose a significant threat to native woods;
- Operations in or around the wood must not have a significant adverse impact on important species, habitats or cultural features;
- Management should maintain the landscape character of the woods;
- Support the Scottish Outdoor Access Code;
- Keep the woods free from inappropriate waste.

This should be a very useful scheme and definitely deserves a closer look.



Riverside Woodlands on the Farm

Author: John Parrott, Scottish Native Woods. T: 01456 486426



The roots of Alder protect riverbanks from erosion and shelter fish from predators and spates.

Woodlands along rivers, burns and lochs have received a lot of attention in recent years. These 'riparian woodlands' vary greatly in character depending on location. They may be on a wet floodplain, a steep bank or in a gorge.

In a natural riparian situation, woodland is generally the dominant vegetation type. This woodland can comprise any native trees including oak, birch, ash, pine, alder or willow, the type of woodland depending on a host of factors including soils, drainage, altitude and aspect.

On floodplains, woodland may be shaped by the force of the river and often occurs alongside other habitats in a 'mosaic'. Periodically, the flooding river cuts new channels; shingle banks are thrown up and backwaters are flooded. This creates a dynamic patchwork of woodland, scrub, grassland and wetland. These fertile floodplain habitats are very attractive to grazing animals. Before they were

driven to extinction, a variety of large mammals played a major role in shaping the riparian environment. Beavers dammed rivers, creating pools and wetlands, while wild boar and aurochs (the ancestor of our domestic cattle) influenced the development of vegetation through their grazing, rooting, trampling and dunging.

As with most of our natural environment, riparian habitats have been modified over centuries. Trees have been cleared, land has been drained and defences built to reduce the incidence of flooding. Despite this, riparian woodlands have survived throughout most of Scotland, probably because they often occupy steep, boggy or inaccessible ground. Whether in the grazed uplands or in lowland arable, these remnants of semi-natural habitat often provide a refuge for wildlife in an otherwise treeless landscape.

Riparian woodlands are often 'hotspots' for biodiversity,

sheltering animals and plants which rarely occur elsewhere. They provide 'wildlife corridors' which animals use for feeding, breeding and roosting. On a larger scale, they contribute to networks which join up other areas of semi-natural habitat and allow wildlife to move around the countryside.

Riparian woodlands also play a major role in securing the well-being and productivity of freshwater habitats. Tree roots reinforce riverbanks and provide shelter for fish. Invertebrates falling into burns from overhanging vegetation provide a large part of a trout's summer diet. Leaves and woody debris provide food for aquatic insects which in turn feed fish.

How do riparian woodlands benefit the farm?

On a farm, better management of riparian margins can bring many benefits to the landholder. Fencing off riparian areas can improve the management and health of livestock. Gathering and checking stock is made easier, and there is less risk of loss or injury. It may make it easier to isolate herds, especially where a burn defines the march boundary. It may also allow you to control access to clean water for drinking.



Fencing off watercourses may help with gathering and checking livestock, and reduce losses.

Whether you raise cattle or grow barley, all farming operations pose some potential risk to water quality. These risks are minimised by placing a buffer strip between a field and a watercourse. You will avoid trampling and erosion of riverbanks, and contamination of

water with dung. Riparian buffers trap potential pollutants such as silt, fertiliser or pesticides. The development of natural vegetation including trees and shrubs will provide shelter for wildlife and enhance fisheries.

In the longer term, the development of a wooded riparian zone may provide shelter for livestock and game, as well as a source of timber.

So, how do I go about restoring riparian woodland on the farm?

Often, the first step to restoring woodland is to exclude livestock. Deer and rabbits may also have to be controlled. Where there is a seed-source, natural regeneration is usually the preferred means of establishment, though on some sites, planting may be necessary. Existing woodland may require some management. Non-native species such as beech, sycamore, rhododendron and Japanese knotweed are often present. These species, together with conifers, cast a heavy shade which may exacerbate erosion and impact on the freshwater environment.

The new Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) provides a number of options for managing existing woodlands or establishing new ones. SFGS grant aids operations such as fencing, removing non-native species, controlling bracken, coppicing and planting. In most instances, SFGS will cover 90% of costs. Furthermore, there is now a grant dedicated to "improving riparian habitat". Where livestock is removed from farmland, there are also payments through SFGS and SEERAD to compensate for the loss of income from grazing.

Riparian schemes are not always as straightforward as other proposals for native woodlands. Fencing and water-gates may need to be designed and sited to cope with spate conditions. Provision may need to be made to allow livestock alternative access to drinking water. It may be beneficial to collaborate with neighbours, and advisable to take specialist advice.

If you would like to know more about riparian woodlands, an illustrated booklet *Restoring and Managing Riparian Woodlands* is available from Scottish Native Woods by e-mailing enquiries@scottishnativewood.org.uk or visiting our website www.scottishnativewoods.org.uk.

Woodland Management for Red Squirrels

Author: Ely Hamilton, Red Squirrel Conservation Officer for the Scottish Borders. T: 017450 23446

The Red Squirrels in South Scotland (RSSS) project was initiated by two local voluntary squirrel management groups, Red Alert South West Scotland (RASWS) in Dumfries & Galloway and The Borders Squirrel Management Group (BSMG) in the Scottish Borders. These groups originally formed to combat the problem of introduced grey squirrels damaging and destroying timber as well as leading to the demise of the native red squirrel in a Scottish stronghold. After several years of campaigning for full-time staff to monitor and manage squirrel populations, these local groups joined forces, under the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP). The SUP is a charity working to promote an integrated and sustainable approach to rural development and land use in Scotland's Southern Uplands, and the RSSS project was established in 2000.

Over the last 4 years two Red Squirrel Conservation Officers (one for each of the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway) have worked to implement the Regional Action Plans for the red squirrel; established a network of foresters, local enthusiasts, agencies, communities and farmers; and identified the 20 commercial upland conifer forests which are considered most likely to offer long-term refuges for red squirrels in south Scotland, as greys become more widespread.

It is within these 20 forests, or Priority Woodlands, that the Red Squirrel Conservation Officers now focus their attention in order to maximise their medium to long term suitability as red squirrel havens and to ensure that measures are put in place to manage and, if possible, prevent the incursion of the grey squirrel. Achieving this goal involves close liaison with forest managers to encourage the consideration of red squirrels as a key component of the forest management process and producing site specific management guidance detailing how best to create sustainable habitats for red squirrels in a commercial forest.

As a general rule, in coniferous woodlands, species that provide a good food source for red squirrels include: Norway Spruce, Scots Pine, Corsican Pine, Lodgepole Pine, European Larch, Japanese Larch and Hybrid Larch. There should be approximately 20% pine, larch or Norway spruce present and where possible these should be planted as blocks and have a varying age structure. Self-thinning mixes such as Sitka spruce / lodgepole pine will also help to provide some extra variety. Edge trees produce more cones so where possible "red squirrel friendly" trees should be planted along forest compartment edges to increase seed availability.

The recent moves to increase the proportion of broadleaved trees in conifer plantations can increase the likelihood of grey squirrel incursion so the project encourages the planting predominantly "red squirrel neutral" species such as willow, alder, aspen, birch and ash and the avoidance of "red squirrel negative" species such as oak, beech, and hazel.

Management for red squirrels can also be carried out in broadleaved woodlands, however the red squirrels do not have quite the competitive edge over grey squirrels that they do in coniferous areas. The coniferous element of the wood should be enhanced where possible and retention of existing conifers such as Scots pine and Norway spruce should be maximised as these provide reliable food sources. In all woodlands, February to September is the breeding season for squirrels so felling operations should be kept to minimum and felling should be done in small coupes to avoid leaving isolated areas.

Grey squirrel control in the surrounding areas at key locations or within the wood itself will be vital to the long term survival of red squirrels and protect trees from the damage caused by bark stripping. It has been shown that by controlling numbers of grey squirrels in and around a wood, resident reds can survive for much longer. Control programmes however must be run on a long-term basis and in a co-ordinated manner. There are two methods of grey squirrel control for red squirrel conservation, shooting and trapping and trapped grey squirrels must be humanely dispatched. Grants are available to managers and landowners in areas surrounding highly ranked Priority Woodlands through the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme which replaced the Woodland Grants Scheme in 2003.



Photo courtesy of Richard Nicholls

Success for red squirrels depends on habitat management

Under this scheme, the RSSS project has successfully set up the only SFGS projects for grey squirrel control for red squirrel conservation in Scotland. The rather lengthy application process and the abundance of supporting information required has meant that time constraints are placed on how many of these schemes can be initiated and monitored. However, the schemes currently on the go have removed 149 grey squirrels in two vulnerable valleys to date with anecdotal evidence to suggest that red squirrels are starting to appear in areas where they have not been seen for years.

The RSSS project also administers the BSMG and RASWS Trap Loan Schemes with over 200 live-capture single-catch traps in operation through the scheme across south Scotland. All participants in the scheme are given training in best practice and are issued with parapox virus testing kits to enable the RSSS project to monitor the incidence of parapox virus in south Scotland. Blood samples are taken from captured grey squirrels and sent to the Moredun Research Institute for analysis. The results are then fed into the National Parapoxvirus Monitoring database. The project has formulated a protocol for immediate action if / when the virus is found to have crossed the border.

Successful conservation action for red squirrels over much of their current range in the UK will depend on two things: habitat management which favours red squirrels and discourages greys and grey squirrel control programmes. The success of these programmes will depend on the continued support from owners and managers of Priority Woodlands and the maintenance and expansion of the grey control network through SFGS and other schemes in the buffer zones of Priority Woodlands and within national and regional 'pinch' points.

Red Squirrel Conservation Officers and Foresters have long been battling the invasive grey squirrel due to its replacement of the red squirrel and exasperating habit of stripping bark from young trees. The challenge ahead will be sourcing reliable funding for local squirrel management groups to take this action forward, a task which is proving to be increasingly arduous. The Red Squirrels in South Scotland project is now seeking funding for a Phase III to progress red squirrel conservation issues and ensure that southern Scotland remains a stronghold for the native red squirrel.

Further information is available on www.red-squirrels.org.uk and www.sup.org.uk.

Consolidating Single Farm Payment Entitlements for New Woodland

Author: Simon Hodge, Social Policy Advisor - Forestry Commission Scotland

A fundamental part of CAP reform is the move away from linking agricultural support to production. From 1 January 2005 agricultural subsidies will be paid to farmers who have entitlements to the Single Farm Payment and who keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition.

Farmers will be free to buy and sell entitlements or to lease them out along with land. A market will be generated, as entitlements will vary in value from farm to farm. Entitlements can only be sold once 80% have been used to draw down payments in any one year. Entitlements that are not used within three years will be withdrawn.

Woodland is not eligible land against which to claim annual Single Farm Payment. Without special provisions, farmers who have, or intend to plant land during the CAP reform implementation period, will have insufficient eligible land against which to claim entitlements. Farmers will not lose these entitlements and would have the option to rent in extra land to use them, or they could sell the surplus entitlements if they have used 80% in any one year.

Use of consolidation for afforestation

It was announced in November 2004 that farmers who plant new woodlands through the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme will now be able to ask for their CAP Single Farm Payment entitlements to be consolidated on their remaining agricultural land.

The National Reserve provisions in Scotland will allow farmers who are creating new woodlands through the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme between 1 Jan 2003 and 16 May 2006 to apply for consolidation of entitlements for the Single Farm Payment on their remaining agricultural land. This will allow afforestation of up to 50% of the eligible hectares without loss of Single Farm Payment. Consolidation will be based on the amount of land declared in the IACS application compared with the average amount from the historic reference period (2000 - 2002).

Farmers using this provision will still be eligible to apply for grants under the SFGS, and for Farmland Premium payments.

Consolidation may also be used where IACS registered forage woodland is brought into SFGS for active woodland management. The Sustainable Woodland Grazing Stewardship grant being piloted in 2006 is intended to provide a framework for ongoing management of grazed woodlands.

Applications will be made as part of the 2005 and 2006 annual IACS returns, submitted between 16 March and the closing date (16 May 2005, 15 May 2006). Woodland planting and / or agreed operations to promote natural regeneration must have actually taken place prior to an application for consolidation. Short Rotation Coppice is not eligible for consolidation.

The consolidation process involves the farmer submitting all his entitlements to the National Reserve and the issue of fewer higher value entitlements. Hence, all entitlements take on the restrictions associated with the National Reserve. In particular, applicants will be unable to sell or lease entitlements for five years, and each entitlement must be used to draw down annual payment for five years. This has implications for farmers wishing to make changes on the agricultural side of their business.

It is recognised that the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has led some people to delay their decisions about whether to plant trees. This new provision will provide additional encouragement for farmers considering tree planting to go ahead with their woodland creation plans.

Administrative procedures

Arrangements for dealing with SFGS and Farmland Premium applications will be unaffected. It will be up to the farmer to apply for consolidation of entitlements. The farmer may be required to produce evidence of an SFGS contract along with his IACS return. Given that planting has to precede the application for consolidation, potential applicants can be reassured that the entitlement consolidation process is purely administrative so, whilst SEERAD do not make guarantees, if the eligibility criteria are met, the application for consolidation will be successful.

Review

The impacts of CAP reform on planting will be reviewed in 2006. Furthermore Farmland Premium will be reviewed in July 2006 as there is a statutory requirement to review rates every five years. We cannot prejudge the review but we will be seeking to ensure that Farmland Premium remains at an appropriate level to cover the income foregone by farmers who have afforested land.

Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme Review

The changes recommended by the review were accepted by the European Commission in January 2005, and are now incorporated into SFGS literature.

Many of the standard costs have been increased. Other changes included the introduction of seven new operations and changes to some of the eligibility criteria for grants.

SEERAD have also made some changes to the Farmland Premium scheme which will be of benefit to many who may wish to carry out more planting. The Farmland Premium area limit for planting on unimproved land has been doubled to 80ha per farm business and doubled to 200ha for planting on crofting common grazing. The changes became effective from 1 January 2005 and apply to Farmland Premium applications received on or after 1 January 2005. However it should be noted that when assessing eligibility, all previous Farmland Premium and FWPS applications received on or after 1 April 1997 will be taken into account.

If you wish to prepare grant applications electronically you will need to use the new Version 3 (introduced in March) of the grant calculator from now on. This is available on-line at: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infid-64zj5h.

At the same time the Commission made a number of changes to the various Locational Premium Schemes. You can get full information on these changes from your forestry consultant or local Conservancy Office.

New Search Tool to find Information for Your Area

When preparing a grant application it is usually important to be aware of the proximity of ancient woodlands, archaeological sites, Special Areas of Conservation, designed landscapes and suchlike. Getting this information used to be time-consuming. Not anymore!

The Forestry Commission website now has a Land Information Search page. Enter a postcode or grid reference and a map will display showing these and many other important features such as National Park boundaries or rights of way. It is also possible to print a copy of the map and a written report that lists those features inside your search area or within a 300m radius. Further information available at: www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

Pollarding or How to Keep your Trees Standing

Author: *Simon Jacyna, Senior Woodlands Consultant, SAC*

One of the big problems with tree shelters is that the favourable micro-climate leads to un-naturally rapid tree growth with weak stems and/or a poorly developed root system. Fast growing species, birch, alder and willows in particular often lean badly or fall over when they reach a height of 2.5 - 3m. Usually just the tie snaps and the tree develops a pronounced lean; often though the stake breaks or the tree bends the shelter and breaks at the height of the top tie. Either way the wood ends up looking a mess.

The common solution is to replace the tie or stake or even put in a thicker post and heavy duty tie. This though is time consuming and doesn't really solve the problem of a thin stem or poor roots.

We have tried 'pollarding' on a couple of sites and found this quite successful and will make more use of this in future. At the end of the second and third growing seasons identify the largest trees of the three problem species and cut the main stem off about 30cm above the top of the shelter. This reduces the 'sail area' of the canopy and while the tree sends out new shoots the following spring the roots and stem have time to develop and strengthen. Although the tree looks rather odd for the next season, apical dominance usually re-asserts itself and the tree recreates a single main stem; after three years the operation is barely visible. If the tree has already blown over you can pollard it when you repair the shelter but it is much quicker and cheaper to do this before the damage has occurred.



Shelters often make fast growing trees unstable

Dates for your diary

Bracken Control for Woodland Regeneration

Dingwall / Fort Augustus, June.
Contact: *John Parrott, Scottish Native Woods.*
T: 01456 486426.
E: john.parrott@scottishnativewoods.org.uk

A Quality Fun Farm Shoot From Scratch

Seggiebank Farm, Kinross, 7 June. £70
Irene Johnson, Game Conservancy Trust.
T: 01828 650543

Growing Quality Broadleaves

Birnam, 10 June, £30.
Contact: *Don Lindsay, Forestry Commission Scotland.*
T: 01738 442830. E: don.lindsay@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Game Conservancy Scottish Fair

Scone Palace, Perthshire. 1- 3 July.

Controlling riverbank erosion

Strathnairn, August / September.
Contact: *John Parrott, Scottish Native Woods.*
T: 01456 486426.
E: john.parrott@scottishnativewoods.org.uk

Biodiversity and Deadwood

South Scotland, 10 November, £30.
Contact: *Christine Leslie, Forestry Commission Scotland.*
T: 01387 256111. E: christine.leslie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Good Establishment Practice

Central Scotland, to be confirmed, £30.
Trevor Blackburn, Forestry Commission Scotland.
T: 0141 941 2611. E: trevor.blackburn@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

National Tree Week

23 November – 4 December
Tree Council
T: 020 7407 9992 or www.thetreecouncil.org.uk

Rescuing Woodlands

Craibstone, Aberdeen. 10/11 September, £110
Contact: British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV),
24 Allan Park, Stirling FK8 2QG
T: 01786 479697 or e-mail training@btcv.org

Brush Cutting and Trimming

Craibstone, Aberdeen. 2/3 July, £175
Contact: BTCV, 24 Allan Park,
Stirling FK8 2QG
T: 01786 479697 or
E: training@btcv.org

Ponds and Wetlands

Craibstone, Aberdeen.
26/27 November, £110
Contact: BTCV, 24 Allan Park,
Stirling FK8 2QG
T: 01786 479697 or
E: training@btcv.org

Pesticides and Herbicides

Craibstone, Aberdeen. 16/17 July, £110
Contact: BTCV, 24 Allan Park,
Stirling FK8 2QG
T: 01786 479697 or
E: training@btcv.org

