

FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND GUIDANCE NOTE 29 - SFGS and WIAT CHALLENGE FUND APPLICATIONS

URBAN & PERI-URBAN WOODLAND SURVEYING & MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Why do a survey and produce a management plan?

For any woodland to receive grant aid from the Forestry Commission, management objectives and a programme of work must be agreed for a stated period. In the case of peri-urban woodland, additional information is required regarding the nature of the woodland, its current condition including levels of public usage etc., and the likely impact of proposed management activities. The benefits of such a survey and planning process are:

- to serve the needs of the woodland manager
- to identify and serve the needs of woodland users (e.g. the local community)
- to set management in the context of the nature and condition of the woodland itself
- to provide baseline data against which to compare the success of management activities
- to provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the management outputs
- to provide opportunities to amend the plan as new priorities for action are identified

Woodland management is a long-term commitment. Peri-urban woodlands can be the subject of a wide range of pressures, often conflicting, and can be at risk from a number of threats (fly-tipping, arson, theft, development etc.). It is recognised that management inputs into a small urban woodland are often proportionately well in excess of those common in rural forestry. A management plan is a practical, flexible tool devised by (or with) and for the woodland manager. In the context of the peri-urban woodland the term 'manager' may apply equally to, for example, a community group as to a conventionally trained forester.

The plan should set out a programme of work to be completed over a set period, including mechanisms to record changes. Without a plan, and the appropriate baseline surveying that feeds into the planning process, it is difficult to keep track of intentions or to follow the impact of management undertaken.

What is a Management Plan?

Essentially, a management plan should provide a rationale for management with detailed prescriptions for an identified period of time (usually five years). The length and detail required will be dependent both on the size and complexity of the wood and the scope for management envisaged. It may also depend on the skills and training of the 'manager' and

it is recognised that, especially with regard to applications from community groups, conventional forestry technical expertise may be limited.

This guidance note provides a template (appendix 1) for a management plan for urban and peri-urban woodlands which is designed to satisfy the requirement of the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme and Woodlands In and Around Towns Challenge Fund. Although detail may not be required against every item mentioned in all circumstances, each main topic should be addressed. The end result need not be a lengthy document.

Management Plans and the WIAT Challenge Fund

The objective of the WIAT Challenge Fund is to encourage the active management of urban and peri-urban woodlands for the benefit of the local economy, the environment, and for the people whose lives may be affected by the woodlands. The latter group usually includes the local community who may use, or potentially wish to use, the woodland for recreation, informal access, health walks, or simply as a pleasant visual backdrop to their urban environment etc.

A management plan is regarded as an essential component in delivering 'on the ground' works in a rational and well thought through manner. It should be the first step in the process of returning neglected woodlands to management.

As a result it is expected that for any given woodland the SFGS & WIAT CF application may be submitted in two parts. The first application may relate to the survey and planning work, with the second relating to the delivery of the identified required operations on the ground.

Urban Woodland Management Plans and the SFGS

Applicants familiar with the SFGS will be aware that it is possible to apply for funding for a range of different management plans, under a number of stewardship objectives. It is recognised however that a management plan for a neglected urban woodland may incorporate a number of objectives and may include elements from some of the SFGS stewardship objectives, and also elements of objectives not included in the SFGS suite of grants.

To simplify this approach under the WIAT initiative it is suggested that a single management plan be prepared to address all the objectives of management. The costs of preparing this single plan can be shown on the WIAT Spreadsheet.

The Management Planning Process

The process of producing a management plan follows a number of steps which define the woodland and identify the opportunities for - and constraints to - management. Following this, the management policies (aim and objectives) are formulated and prescriptions written. The overall plan should provide a vision for the future and allow for adaptation as circumstances change. The following sets out how to undertake the main process of producing a plan. Appendix 1 provides a framework for a management plan layout, and gives, under the specific headings more guidance as to the type of baseline information to be gathered at the survey stage.

The start of the process is the survey. Appendix 2 provides a template survey form which may be used to guide and record the survey process. The survey will provide information on the state of the woodland, identifying where management opportunities exist, such as where the most appropriate areas for regeneration are, where there may be requirements for professional tree safety inspections, or where there are opportunities for enhanced public access. One of the most important aspects of the urban woodland survey, however, is to identify stakeholders. Table 1 below describes some of the methods that may be used to identify stakeholders.

Table 1: Stakeholder Identification

Stakeholder type	Possible Methods of Identification
<i>Statutory consultees</i>	<i>To be identified by the Forestry Commission</i>
<i>Local woodland users (dog walkers etc.)</i>	<i>To be identified through on site observation (engage with people when conducting other survey work). Mail-shots, Poster campaigns in local shops etc. The press. Public consultation events (village hall open days etc). Community Councils can be used to further engage local people and identify interest groups.</i>
<i>Special interest groups</i>	<i>Local knowledge. The press. Poster campaigns etc.</i>
<i>Schools</i>	<i>Direct approach to local schools.</i>

Use the information from the survey to fill in sections 1 (summary) and 2 (description) of the Management Plan (see the template in Appendix 1). Section 3 of the plan (Management Aim) should be devised by or with the agreement of the woodland owner, the manager, the identified stakeholders and the Forestry Commission. The main aim should encompass the aspirations of the woodland users for the longer term. One way to approach this issue is to look forward ten years and consider how you wish the woodland to appear at that time, and what services you wish it to provide.

Table 2 gives some examples of appraisal methods that may be used to identify key issues by engaging local communities in the survey and planning process. The extent to which these methods are employed may depend on the interest shown in the project and the scale of the project. Smaller projects with limited identified stakeholder numbers may opt to use just one of the methods, for example a semi-structured group walk during which the options for management are discussed and new issues identified. A more complex project may use many more methods for engaging the local community. For example a hall may be hired where photographs and maps could be displayed and annotated by local stakeholders. At the same time ranking exercises with the stakeholders may help prioritise potentially conflicting objectives for management. Group walks to discuss and fine-tune the priorities for action on site could then follow these exercises.

Table 2: Participatory Appraisal Techniques – community participation in the planning process

Appraisal Method	How to do it
<i>Using Interest Group Engagement</i>	<i>Interest groups may have distinct needs and concerns from other woodland users. If such distinct interest groups exist it may be worth holding meetings to present ideas to the group and gain specific feedback. Treating interest groups in this individual manner may help identify issues that would not be apparent in a wider consultation exercise. Examples of specific interest groups may include: horse riders, mountain bikers, schools etc.</i>
<i>Interviews (semi-structured)</i>	<i>Interviews with stakeholders can be conducted individually or in small groups. The usual context is for these interviews to take place as part of a wider event, for example following a more formal presentation. Interviews are not questionnaires and should be loosely structured informal events with a conversational feel. Prepare a brief list of topics to prompt the interview and use open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer. Record the findings of the interview immediately afterwards.</i>
<i>Using Maps</i>	<i>It is often useful to prepare some form of maps ahead of presenting ideas to stakeholders and asking for feedback. Make several copies and invite stakeholders to annotate the maps with their concerns / suggestions. It is often useful to have post-it notes available so that comments can be stuck onto the maps at the appropriate place. At the later planning stages woodland user representatives may become involved in plan preparation and may take a more active role in the presentation of ideas in draft plan format.</i>
<i>Using Aerial Photos & Landscape Photographs</i>	<i>As with the use of maps these are helpful tools to use to prompt feedback. Discuss ideas and relate them to the photos.</i>
<i>Using Group Walks</i>	<i>Select a time suitable to attract the most stakeholders. Plan a route that will give the opportunity to discuss all the key issues. Invite interested parties to attend. Have a checklist of topics to discuss but look out for feedback relating to new issues. Record the feedback during and after the walk.</i>
<i>Using Questionnaires</i>	<i>Questionnaires may be successful methods of gaining feedback if they are short and do not require a great obligation on behalf of the respondent (e.g. to post it back, or to take a lot of time). If you choose to use questionnaires hand them out at other events (e.g. group walks etc) and try and collect them afterwards. Try not to use leading questions, but take hints from other consultation exercises as to what questions may be relevant and of concern.</i>

It is important that the proposals for woodland management and aspirations of the stakeholders are realistic and take account of any constraints that apply to the area. Section five should be used to inform the setting of the objectives (section four). Normally the land manager will know what constraints and obligations apply, but discussions with the identified stakeholders or statutory consultees such as the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage, or perhaps even the Regional Archaeologist may be required, if doubt exists, and to identify issues not previously recognised.

Setting the objectives for management is perhaps the most tortuous aspect of the planning process. The key to objectives is to make sure they are SMART *specified, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited*. The objectives can be prioritised with the top

priorities, and therefore perhaps more resources, being given to those that directly meet the main aim of the plan (section three). For example, assessment of the current condition of the wood, including the 'evaluation' in Section Two, and the main aim (Section Three) will determine which are of highest priority.

As the WIAT Challenge Fund is competitive it is for each applicant to judge how best to balance the need to meet the objectives of the scheme against the requirement to provide value for money.

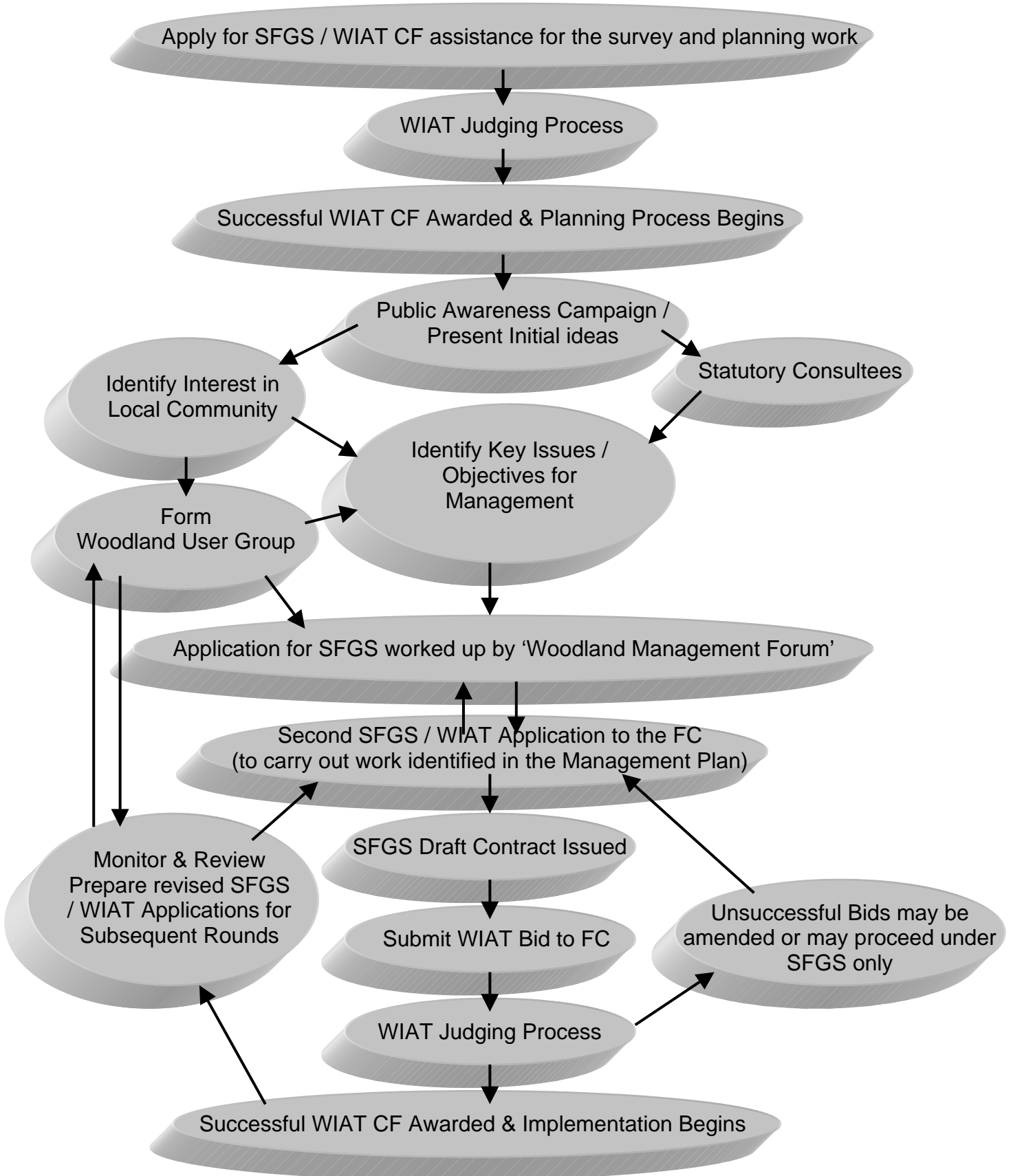
There are two objectives which will be fairly standard across most management plans. They are: i) to fulfil all legal or contractual obligations within the plan period, and ii) To detect changes resulting from management over the plan period.

Having set objectives, the prescriptions that make up the work programme for the five year period will be relatively straightforward to determine. Each objective should have a prescription(s) or an explanation of how progress towards achieving it is to be made, although the latter may not be a specific prescription. Where no action is intended during the plan period this should also be stated. All prescription must be accompanied by accurate maps.

The prescriptions arising from the management planning process will then usually be the subject of a second SFGS / WIAT CF application.

Summary

The following flow diagram gives an example of the steps involved in the one model for the planning and delivery of urban woodland restoration under the WIAT program. This model assumes a level of public interest in the woodland management and uses a collaborative approach to deliver the outcomes:



1. The applicant applies for SFGS / WIAT CF assistance to fund the survey and planning process.
2. If successful the applicant formulates some initial ideas for the management of the neglected urban Woodland. Using the methods described in table 1 the applicant engages local interest.
3. The applicant engages statutory consultees at an early stage (FC can help with this). Where interest is strong in the local community the applicant considers the formation of a woodland user group (unless one already exists) to represent local interest in the planning process.
4. Public meetings & other 'scoping' exercises help to identify the key issues and objectives to be addressed in the planning process. Concerns of the woodland user group and wider public, and of the statutory consultees, are considered and incorporated at this stage.
5. A Forum involving the applicant, woodland user group representatives, the woodland owners and other stakeholders prepare the management plan and work up the second SFGS application (relating to on the ground operations).
6. The management plan and second SFGS application is submitted to the Forestry Commission. Changes may be recommended or the application may be processed to the draft contract stage.
7. The applicant submits the WIAT CF Bid.
8. The judging process considers the bids and announces the results. The judges may advise as to whether an unsuccessful bid should be resubmitted under a future round with amendments.
9. The implementation of the work begins on successful bids. Unsuccessful bids may proceed with the work identified in the SFGS contract but will only receive the SFGS funding (no WIAT Top Up).
10. The applicant, together with the woodland user group, reviews and monitors the delivery of the management plan's objectives. Where key issues are not being met, or where new interest groups or issues have been identified, amendments can be made to the SFGS grant or new SFGS / WIAT assistance applied for.

Appendix 1

MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE FOR WOODLANDS IN AND AROUND TOWNS

SECTION ONE: Introduction

Name of Wood (Use a name which is unique and will be constant throughout the application).

Ref: (Applicable only if the management plan has been prepared with SFGS funding).

Date of Plan Production: (This should be the date the plan was agreed and finalised and by whom).

Contract Name and Address: (owner or agent)

Summary (Details of sources of information for the plan such as surveys; what the plan covers; and the length of time covered by the plan, both with regard to longer term and shorter term prescriptions).

SECTION TWO: Description (attach and refer to the Survey Form as required – see appendix 2)

Area: (hectares)

Woodland type: (NVC, if known, or brief description – *e.g. mainly native broadleaved etc.*)

Location: (National Grid Reference & Nearest Town)

Status: (any designations – *e.g. SSSI etc*)

Legal Details: (tenancies, owner's details and other legal aspects)

General Description: (Brief description of the wood, covering: dominant species; condition including ground flora; structure; age classes; brief history of management; habitats; position within the water catchment; range of species present. Include details of any public access, restrictions to access, any known interest groups, any identified threats or problems (e.g. persistent fly-tipping). Quantify the important details (e.g. length in metres of existing footpaths, approximate areas of coppice woodland etc).

Physical Aspects: (e.g. climate, soils, hydrology, and slope)

Consultation / Participation: (Describe the methods used to engage the public and identify wider stakeholders in the management process. Detail the level to which the stakeholders have been involved in the planning process (e.g. were they consulted and how? was a woodland user group formed? Do they sanction the proposed operations? Etc. Attach relevant documentation to support this section in an appendix)

Key Features: (Identify any significant features; demand for enhanced access, lengths of path to upgrade, unusual plant or animal species, archaeological features, etc, which need

to be taken into account when management decisions are taken and prescriptions set. Attach and refer to maps as applicable)

Land Use: (Information about past and surrounding land use which is relevant in the context of setting management objectives. Include all aspects which will influence the proposed management operations, particularly threats *e.g. a threat might be frequent fly-tipping, or regular access by motorcyclists.*)

Evaluation: (Assess the importance of the wood in national and local terms, considering, amongst other things, the following qualities; current public usage, any rare or unusual species to be protected; landscape significance relative to its urban setting; historical or archaeological features; other features of particular interest; potential value after management. Bear in mind operations likely to damage these interests. It may be helpful to list the special qualities and features of the wood and identify the relevant importance of these.)

Compartments: (With reference to a map, identify and describe briefly any sub-divisions established for management purposes.)

SECTION THREE: Constraints & Opportunities (List any natural or man-made features or access agreements across the wood which impact positively or negatively on the ability to deliver the aim or objectives, such as wayleaves, archaeological features; impediments to vehicular access; public use of the site.)

Obligations: (Any factor which may require attention during the life of the plan due to legal or formal arrangements should be listed with relevant details, *e.g.* responsibility for maintenance of boundary fences, SSSI management agreements etc.)

Resources: (Provide information as to how work is to be undertaken, both financially and physically *i.e.* which grants are being applied for, other sources of funding, work to be contracted out, volunteer activity.)

SECTION FOUR: Management Aim (note that Sections 3 and 4 can be combined)

(This should be the overall long-term aim for the wood which should not alter over time, unless there is a total change in the circumstance of the woodland).

SECTION FIVE: Management Objectives

(All objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time limited), and set for as long as is realistic (this time scale may be limited to the duration of the WIAT CF Initiative). They could be divided into two categories (see below). Where the wood has been divided into compartments the secondary objectives should be set out by compartment.)

Primary Objectives: (These objectives are those of highest priority for the wood in its current state and which will also progress the aim. There is one additional priority objective

which will be constant across most management plans: "To fulfil all legal or contractual obligations committed to within the plan period".)

Secondary Objectives: (These have lower priority than Primary Objectives and may not necessarily make progress towards achieving the aim but are nonetheless achievable in the plan period. These objectives may cover a short time period).

SECTION SIX: Prescriptions

(These should be divided into primary and secondary to correspond to the division in objectives. Each objective should have at least one prescription to deliver it. Included in the prescriptions should be measures to monitor the impact of the work undertaken. It is important that at appropriate intervals provision is made to feed the results of monitoring into the management decision process, and to thus inform any future applications)

SECTION SEVEN: Plan Review & Monitoring

(Detail how the outcomes will be monitored and recorded. Also provision for the review of the plan should be made by setting the date and stating those parties involved in the review, e.g. review during year two of the plan, through discussion with the woodland user group and the FC)

SECTION EIGHT: Work Plan Summary

(The prescriptions should be set out in a timetable covering the plan period, providing an "at a glance" table of the tasks committed to.)

SECTION NINE: Maps (Adequate maps should be produced at the smallest appropriate scale to illustrate the zonations and proposed works (1:10,000 or 1:2,500). Normally, maps produced for the SFGS application will be acceptable but additional maps may be required if the WIAT Top Up element funds additional works.

SECTION TEN: Appendices (include any important additional information or references, e.g. specifications of work to be completed).

Appendix 2

SURVEY RECORDING TEMPLATE FOR WOODLANDS IN AND AROUND TOWNS

General (a map should accompany the form)

Woodland Name (s)	
Owner's Name	
Organisation	
Address / Contact details	
Telephone	
Email	
Agent's Name*	
Organisation*	
Agent's Address / Contact details*	
Telephone*	
Email*	

**if applicable*

Location (a map should accompany the form)

Nearest Town	
Suburb	
Local Authority	
Is the woodland fragmented (Y/N) (made up of separate small blocks)	
If yes how many distinct woodland units are owned?	
Grid Reference(s) to *centre of site (s)	
Access points (pedestrian) please list with grid ref	
Access points (vehicular) please list with grid ref	
Surrounding land use (e.g. agriculture, housing, industrial)	
Is the exact boundary known?	

**If there are multiple woodlands then insert all applicable grid references*

Obligations

Existing FC Grants Y/N		Type	
Ref No (s)			
<i>Other funding bodies committed</i>			
<i>Nature of funding</i>			

General Woodland Description

Total Area		Mainly homogenous (Y/N)	
Moribund, Mature, Young woodland, Establishing woodland (show % by area)			
Trees: Mainly Broadleaved / Mainly Conifer / Mixed			
Native Woodland? (i.e. is the woodland more than 50% locally native species)		Y/N	
What 'Habitat Action Plan' type is it?			
Is there an understorey? (% By area coverage / type)			
Topography (v steep, steep, moderate, slight slope, flat)			
Aspect if sloping (i.e. N, NE, E etc)			
Altitude			
Ground conditions			
Any existing windblow		Area (ha)	
Brief description (include other relevant factors not listed separately)			
Area analysis (inc. OG)	Species (List)	Area (ha)	

Recreation, Amenity & Access (identify features on a map)

Existing usage (e.g. heavy, light none)			
Type & numbers (day visits)			
Footpaths? (Estimate total length)			
Formal / informal			
Access condition (refer to maps)	Map ref	Length	Condition
Disabled access (describe)			
Other recreational usage (e.g. horses, orienteering)			
Estimate of volume (days, numbers)			
Fly-tipping			
Litter			
Vandalism			
Dangerous trees (number)			
Other perceived problems (E.g. sense of danger, too dark, arson)			
Opportunities			
Constraints			

Community Involvement

Woodland user group (y/n) Name / contact	
Any informal action group	
Perceived interest in above (Evidence may include signage etc)	
Educational usage, past present (if not why not?)	
Opportunities	
Constraints	

Environmental

Designations	
Management plans / agreements	
Statutory authority	
<i>Area of woodland designated (show on map)</i>	
Threats (describe)	
Opportunities	
Other environmental interest (e.g. red squirrel / orchids etc)	

Surveyor

Name	Signature	Date
Organisation		