

Guidance for Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland

Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities

What is this about?

This guidance is for case officers, applicants, landowners and managers and their agents. The purpose is to provide advice on applications for Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland under Rural Development Contracts -Rural Priorities.

Background

Native, and especially ancient, semi-natural woodlands in Scotland have a high biodiversity and historic value, including the high biodiversity value of associated open ground habitats and their associated species. The need to halt the loss of biodiversity within woodlands and continue to reverse previous losses is one of the key themes within the Scottish Forestry Strategy. Priority is given to bringing Natura and Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) into 'favourable condition'.

Inappropriate grazing of domestic livestock has in many cases impacted negatively on the biodiversity of native woodlands. However, it is widely recognised that appropriate levels of domestic livestock, particularly cattle, can have a positive role in maintaining biodiversity in open wooded ecosystems. Livestock can maintain grassland, wetland and heathland components within woodlands, but if stocking rates are too high or not seasonally adjusted they may prevent desirable tree regeneration. Controlled grazing can not only enhance biodiversity but can also be used as a management tool to encourage tree regeneration. Some species of high conservation importance, such as pearl bordered and marsh fritillary, require controlled grazing in their habitats for survival.

This grant is complementary to other 'forest-environment payments' to support management that will enhance the environmental, economic and public amenity value of woodlands.

Controlled grazing of livestock in woodlands, to deliver specific biodiversity objectives, goes beyond the minimum requirements of UK legislation governing the management of woodland and the requirements of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition in respect of grazing by domestic livestock. It seeks to deliver additional environmental benefits.

What will this achieve?

The aim of controlled livestock grazing is to enhance biodiversity in semi-natural native woodland, in order to:

- maintain existing areas of priority woodland habitat
- enhance the ecological condition of priority woodland habitat
- increase the overall extent of priority woodland habitat where feasible and desirable

The grant will also deliver one or more of the following supplementary objectives

- enhance biodiversity by maintaining open habitats, reducing over dominant or invasive plant species, and maintaining woodland plant communities
- benefit individual species or groups
- encourage, where appropriate, tree and tall shrub regeneration, and the expansion of both woodland and montane scrub
- encourage internal woodland structural diversity
- protect soils and watercourses
- enhance archaeological features

What can you do?

You can have livestock grazing in woodland under a controlled grazing plan. This is available to potential applicants with semi-natural native woodland. Semi-natural native woodland is defined as an area of land where semi-natural native trees are growing and whose canopy, when mature, will cover at least 20% of the area. Woodlands must be on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Long established woodlands qualify where they are mainly native species

Priority will be given to management that will bring SSSIs and Natura sites into “favourable condition”.

It is also available to potential applicants with Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) that are actively being restored to native woodland.

Eligibility Criteria

The grant requires the implementation of a sustainable grazing management regime, tailored to individual woodlands to reflect woodland type, grazing history and site specific management objectives. The option may require the exclusion of livestock in some years.

The livestock management and grazing regime must be set out in an agreed adaptive grazing management plan and this must be submitted with the proposal for grant aid. This must include a site-appropriate grazing regime that is determined with the help of the “Woodland Grazing Toolbox”. See

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/woodlandgrazingtoolbox>

Evidence to support the adoption of a grazing management regime must accompany the proposal for grant aid, for example a letter of support from, or a reference to advisory material produced by, a recognised conservation organisation. The plan must describe the expected environmental impact of the livestock grazing. The plan must take account of the impact of grazing by wild deer. Deer control, if required, must accord with a deer management plan agreed with the Deer Commission for Scotland.

Woodland Size Criteria

The following minimum size restrictions apply:

- For sites that are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, no size restrictions apply.



- For other semi-natural native woodlands, an application must include an area of woodland of at least 10 hectares.
- For Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), an application must contain at least 5 hectare that are actively being restored to native woodland.

Ongoing Commitments

- The livestock-grazing regime can only be adjusted in line with the results of the site monitoring requirements within the plan.
- The grazing of the woodland must be managed to maintain an appropriate balance between open ground, regenerating trees, scrub and closed canopy woodland. The ultimate aim of the grazing regime is to achieve favourable woodland condition. At some stage in the life of the woodland, regeneration is expected at a level sufficient to maintain current woodland extent (which may involve the complete but temporary removal of grazing) The open habitats must be managed to the appropriate technical guidance notes.
- Periodic monitoring (normally two times per year) and recording of the impact of the grazing regime must be undertaken in respect of the site specific objectives. Annual records of monitoring will be required for inspection and verification purposes.
- Excessive poaching by stock must be avoided by managing stock carefully when ground conditions are wet.
- Pesticides, lime, artificial fertiliser, farmyard manure or slurry must not be applied to the site. However, herbicides may be applied to control injurious weeds (Weeds Act 1959) and/or non-native invasive plant species using a weed wiper, spot treatment or hand sprayer.
- Supplementary feeding of stock is only permitted when it is required to deliver the conservation objectives.
- The trees must be managed in accordance with the silvicultural system for the woodland specified and agreed in the grazing management plan.
- There must be no new drainage or modification/improvement to existing drainage systems. Existing drains can be maintained.
- In upland areas where relevant to Capercaillie and Black Grouse all new fences should be marked with bird strike markers.

What costs will be supported?

Grant support will be provided through annual payments of £87/hectare/year for a period of 5 years. Where appropriate, the following capital payments are also available through the Woodland Improvement Grant option.

| Operation | Payment Rate |
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| Primary treatment of bracken | £200/ hectare of infested land |
| Eradication of scrub/woody vegetation : Light vegetation | £600/hectare |
| Eradication of scrub/woody vegetation: Intermediate vegetation | £850/ hectare |
| Eradication of scrub/woody vegetation: Heavy vegetation | £1250/hectare |
| Removal from site of the cut | £500/hectare |



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| shrub/woody vegetation: Light vegetation | |
| Removal from site of the cut shrub/woody vegetation: intermediate vegetation | £1050/hectare |
| Removal from site of the cut shrub/woody vegetation: heavy vegetation | £1450/hectare |
| Peat dam | £0.26 per metre of moor grip to be blocked with peat dams. Minimum payment £300. |
| Scare or temporary fencing | £1.50/ metre |
| Provision of water trough to replace traditional watering points | £195 each |
| Installation of water supply pipe to water trough or pasture pump | £3 per metre of pipe laid |
| Water trough pump: cattle- operated pasture or nose pump | £180 per installed pump |
| Stock bridge for bog management: Small bridge | £170 |
| Stock bridge for bog management: Large bridge | £620 |

What Regional Priorities are relevant?

The main Regional Priorities where Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland will contribute are:

- 'Biodiversity' - the relevant package is 'Native Woodlands and Associated Habitats & Species'. Other packages where woodland grazing may contribute to biodiversity are 'Improving Conditions for Golden Eagle', 'Hen harriers' and 'Capercaillie' and 'Black grouse', although you will be required to justify your reasons for using woodland grazing under these packages.
- 'Adaptions to Mitigate Climate Change'. The relevant package is 'Promoting Carbon Capture & Storage'.
- 'Landscape' – woodland grazing will only help to safeguard the landscape in specific circumstances. The relevant packages are 'Safeguard and enhance the natural landscape' and 'Geodiversity'. You will be required to justify your reasons for using woodland grazing in this priority.



Questions and Answers

Appendix 1

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>What are rules on Single Farm Payment?</p> | <p>Woodlands are not generally eligible for SFP on the basis that the primary use of the land is not agricultural. The Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland Option is primarily a management tool introduced to enhance biodiversity and is not adopted to produce an agricultural product. The land use is seen as woodland and therefore not eligible for SFP.</p> <p>Where grazing takes place for the primary purpose of producing an agricultural product, areas of open woodland may be considered eligible for SFP (given the SAF code WDG) if the applicant can demonstrate that the density of trees is not more than 50 per hectare.</p> <p>Areas of open woodland with a tree density of more than 50 trees per hectare may also be considered eligible for SFPS. The applicant must demonstrate that the land has a history of grazing, and continued grazing (for the primary purpose of producing an agricultural product) is not damaging the ecological value of the site.</p> |
| <p>What are the rules on Farm Woodland Premium?</p> | <p>The Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland Option cannot be paid on the same area of land as SFGS-Farmland Premium (or Farm Woodland Premium Scheme) for the term of the SFGS-FP agreement that is 20 or 30 yrs as this would constitute double-funding.</p> <p>The payment rate for Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland includes a cost for income foregone through lost agricultural production. The annual payment for SFGS-FP also includes an element to compensate for income foregone through lost agricultural production. To pay both grants on the same land would therefore constitute double-funding. (Farm Woodland Premium payments are 'front-loaded' and paid within the first half of the term).</p> |
| <p>How is the grant rate of £87 per hectare derived? It does not seem enough to cover costs of producing a plan?</p> | <p>The payment rate has been calculated on the basis of the additional cost of herding and handling cattle in and out of woodland, supplementary feeding, checking of stock, time for monitoring and writing reports and also income foregone through lost agricultural production, i.e. reduced weight gain on the poor pasture within the woodland and the resulting reduced market price.</p> <p>The cost of a grazing plan is not included within the grant rate as preparing the grazing plan is considered to be part of the application process. Within Rural Development Contracts, a contribution of the cost of plans is provided through the outcome plan.</p> |



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| <p>Is a Forest Plan required?</p> | <p>A Forest Plan (FP) which lays out the long term management (10-20 years) of the woodland is normally required for access to Sustainable Management of Forests Option. A FP does not necessarily need to be complex and the detail included in your Plan should be in line with the scale, complexity and sensitivity of the woodland.</p> <p>However, satisfactory existing management plans, such as a good native woodland plan, will be accepted in place of a FP.</p> <p>Where controlled livestock grazing is the only activity being carried out the Woodland Grazing Management Plan will be sufficient.</p> |
| <p>What is the smallest scale that the grant works for?</p> | <p>The woodland size criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated sites – no size threshold • Non designated sites > 10ha |
| <p>How does this option “fit” with other forestry payments?</p> | <p>Other grants are available through Sustainable Forest Management, such as the £28/ha for the management of native woodlands and £28/ha for Management of areas subject to high levels of access.</p> <p>There is also a range of capital items available through Woodland Improvement Grants.</p> |
| <p>Is supplement feeding permitted? Does this counteract conservation objectives?</p> | <p>Supplementary feeding is permitted but applicants must ensure that this does not damage the woodland habitat.</p> |
| <p>Can grazing just be deer? (or rabbits)</p> | <p>The Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland Grant is for livestock such as cattle and so excludes wild deer. The impact of deer grazing must be considered as part of the management plan and help with control is available through Reducing Deer Impact Grant.</p> |
| <p>What is the % of woodland cover required for controlled livestock grazing?</p> | <p>To be eligible, woodland cover % must be 20% or more.</p> |
| <p>How far beyond 20% open ground can the option apply?</p> | <p>Up to 20% of the woodland area can be open ground. We will not pay for areas of open ground that are beyond the 20%.</p> |



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| <p>Can this option be adopted for new woodland plantings in 10-15 years?</p> | <p>The Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland Grant is aimed at semi-natural native woodland. New woodland plantings of 10-15 years old are not eligible.</p> |
| <p>How rigorous is the monitoring?</p> | <p>Applicants must monitor the impacts of the grazing at least two times each year and take any necessary action to modify the grazing regimes.</p> |
| <p>Is 5 years enough time?</p> | <p>The normal period for Rural Development Contracts is 5 years. The grazing of the woodland must be managed to maintain an appropriate balance between open ground, regenerating trees, scrub and closed canopy woodland. The ultimate aim of the grazing regime is to achieve favourable woodland condition. 5 years may not be sufficient to achieve these objectives and controlled grazing may be undertaken on a longer term basis. Application for further funding should be possible.</p> |
| <p>What if outcomes are not achieved? Will there be repayments?</p> | <p>It is important that the objectives are clearly laid out in the Woodland Grazing Management Plan and the livestock-grazing regime carefully monitored and adjusted to achieve the plan objectives. Monitoring records should be kept for any inspections and to explain the decisions on grazing regime management.</p> <p>Repayments are unlikely, unless grazing has caused ecological damage to the woodland.</p> |
| <p>When will uptake of the grant be reviewed?</p> | <p>FCS and SNH will monitor uptake of the grant over the next 12 months and in 2011 consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements to eligibility criteria and operations • scope for widening the grant |
| <p>Threat to Hazel woods from scrub removal?</p> | <p>We do not consider this as being a significant threat. Management operations such as scrub removal would need approval as part of the Forest Plan/Management Plan/Grazing Plan.</p> |
| <p>Are the use of pigs and wild boar allowed?</p> | <p>Yes, however the numbers of pigs and wild boar together with the duration of time spent in the woodland need to be very carefully considered as part of the grazing regime in order to avoid damage to the woodland. Pigs are often used as 'rotovators' to encourage regeneration and can deal effectively with bracken.</p> <p>More detail is required within the Toolbox for these species and</p> |



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| | it is recommended that you seek specialised advice before introducing these species to a woodland. |
| <p>On designated sites this option will score OK but will come under Regional Priorities 09 so have to go to RPAC for Non-Designated sites.</p> <p>The option will not be able to score high enough to go through either ongoing approval or RPAC – this is a big problem as it cannot score high on quality</p> | <p>Agree</p> <p>The current threshold score for Proposals be submitted via the ongoing approval process for forestry applications (i.e. Proposals with forestry options submitted via Priorities 14, 21 and 23) is currently 12 with a buffer score of 10. The most appropriate Regional Priority is 14 - <i>An increased contribution to the diversity and character of landscape from Scotland's woods and forests</i>. Under this Priority a Proposal for Controlled Livestock Grazing of Woodland would secure a high against the Quality assessment criteria.</p> |
| <p>What is the incentive for owners on Non-Designated sites?</p> | <p>Whilst semi-natural woodlands on designated sites are being given high priority because of the importance of bringing these sites into 'favourable condition', the grant also recognises that other semi-natural woodland are also of high value and therefore non-designated sites of over 10 hectares are eligible for this grant. This threshold will be considered at the 12 month review in 2011.</p> |