

Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme Highland Locational Premium 2006 – 2008



Introduction

In support of the **Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy**, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) is offering additional funding through a **Locational Premium** to encourage the planting of certain types of new woodlands in Highland Region. This note explains how to apply for this funding.

What is Locational Premium?

Locational Premium is an extra grant payable in addition to the standard grants available under the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS). It is called a “locational” premium because it is only available in parts of Scotland where the Scottish Executive considers woodland planting, regeneration, improvement or management are priorities. The Highland region is such an area, reflecting the commitment of the Highland Council (THC) and local people to woodland development and the production of the Forest and Woodland Strategy.

Forestry Commission Scotland has consulted with the local Forest and Woodland Strategy steering group, and other stakeholders, about the details of the criteria, which will apply to this premium, and their recommendations have been used to formulate the rules of the scheme. Applications must satisfy the requirements of SFGS and meet the criteria set out in this leaflet. You must apply for an SFGS in the normal way. The categories of SFGS grants which apply to this premium are drawn from woodland expansion grants for planting new woodlands (P). They are listed in **Table 1**. Woodland planting which is eligible for SFGS and Locational Premium may also qualify for the Farmland Premium payments from the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department.

How much is the Locational Premium?

The Highland Locational Premium for 2006/07 is shown in **Table 1**. The Scottish Executive has announced that a total fund of £1,500,000 will be available for the Highland Locational Premium over the 3 years, 2006 to 2008.

The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy

The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy was produced by the Highland Council, with input from the Woodland Strategy steering group and many local people and organisations. The strategy sets out a vision that the trees and woodlands of Highland region will contribute to the quality of life for local people, and identifies a range of priorities including:

- “expansion of productive forest – establishment of woodlands geared to timber production in the less-constrained areas of the region and....”
- “expansion of native woodland – particularly in areas of higher natural heritage value or important areas for recreation – via forest habitat networks and.....”
- “measures to increase community benefits from forests –expansion and development of woodlands around settlements, crofter forestry”

The strategy also recognises “the increased need to add local value to timber and timber products. However, a number of species which are most appropriate for local use, such as Douglas fir, Larch and Scots pine (at appropriate stocking densities), are becoming increasingly difficult to source, and over the last 15 years planting of these species has significantly declined. Establishment of mixed woods, and diversification of existing woods, around crofting townships and communities will help safeguard this resource for the future”. The Council’s guidelines for sustainable building in rural areas identify the environmental gain in using local materials, particularly timber and wood as a fuel.

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The strategy also recognises “the importance of habitat networks in improving the connectivity between often fragmented woodlands, allowing them to function as larger ecosystems. These networks benefit key habitats and increase the ability of associated species to adapt to climate change”.

Following consultation, priority objectives and actions were identified in the strategy. The aim of the Highland Locational Premium is therefore to:

- Establish well designed woodland which will provide a range of timbers for local use and complement the expansion of new native forests in Highland.
- Enable a targeted expansion of Forest Habitat Networks in Highland to improve forest diversity and biodiversity and increase the ability of species to adapt to climatic changes.

The Locational Premium seeks to support the implementation of these objectives and offers specific grant assistance against the two themes listed in Table 1.

Where is the Locational Premium available?

You can apply for Locational Premium on suitable sites throughout Highland Region.



What types of planting will be eligible?

The premium aims to encourage woodland creation which will help deliver the Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy. It will be available for:

- Theme 1 (adding value locally for crofting townships and communities); providing opportunities to create new mixed woodlands of species such as Douglas fir, Larch and Scots pine (maximum proportion of Sitka spruce 20%), from 5 ha to 30 ha. This may include planting linked to existing young new native plantations which are accessible and nearby the communities which will benefit from them.
- Theme 2 (expand forest habitat networks); planting any native species woodland up to 100 ha which creates a viable link or links between existing native woodland forest habitat networks. Non-native species may be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear biodiversity gain.

Table 1

Theme	SFGS Activity	Scheme Size	Locational Premium Amount	Locational Premium Code
1. Adding value locally for crofting townships and communities	Planting Grant 5 (P5) Improving the diversity of the farmed/crofting landscape	5ha - 30ha	£1,400/ha	5310
2. Expand forest habitat networks	Planting Grant 2 (P2) Expanding the area of native woodland	1.25ha - 100ha	First 20ha - £2,000/ha	2311
			Next 30ha - £1,000/ha	2312
	Planting Grant 2 (P2) Planting FHN appropriate non-native species (ie: DF, NS, Larch, SP)		£450/ha	2313
				2210

Additional Requirements

The Locational Premium represents a significant extra level of public funding for woodland creation and it must, therefore, deliver more benefits than the standard SFGS alone. To ensure this extra delivery, applications for Locational Premium will be assessed against the additional criteria set out below:

All proposals

- Is the site suitable for tree planting? Consider such factors as geology, soil, exposure, aspect, existing flora and fauna and archaeological interests;
- Is the provenance and species of tree suitable to the site? The provenance and origin of seed used to grow trees is considered highly important and should be approved;
- Are the proposed establishment operations satisfactory for the Highland conditions?
- Is the design of the proposed wood sympathetic to the surrounding landscape?

Theme 1

- Area is owned leased or managed on a long term agreement by a local community or is within a crofting township,
- Site is accessible by suitable public road, good quality farm track or other access route,
- Site is suitable for growing quality timber,
- Site is linked to existing new native woodland and is close to the settlement who will benefit from the quality timber produced,
- The site is not part of Scotland's Natura network.

Theme 2

- The proposed woodland contributes to local biodiversity action plan targets for woodland priority habitats and/or species,
- Employing a collaborative approach with adjacent landowners - networks may cross boundaries and the most effective, largest and best value network links may be on two or more landholdings,
- The new woodland links existing native woodland forest habitat networks (creating new native woodland between existing blocks of non-native species or non-native/native mixes may not necessarily do this),
- The biodiversity benefits of the new woodland creation outweigh any negative impacts on open ground species or habitats,
- The new woodland is at least 110m wide at all points - to provide a viable network link, the woodland must have sufficient 'core' area to counter edge effects,
- The proposed area of woodland creation, in relation to the network area created, meets or exceeds the assessment table threshold?

How do I apply?

You must apply for an SFGS in the normal way. An applicant's pack containing application forms is available from Forestry Commission Scotland. In order to simplify processing of the application we will only accept whole compartments for the Locational Premium, so you should bear this in mind when completing the forms. Please use the specific Locational Premium reference code listed in **Table 1** to indicate the compartments for which you wish to apply for the premium. *Note: land covered by existing approved grant schemes will not be eligible for the Locational Premium.*

There is a limited amount of money available for Locational Premium. Therefore, it will be allocated on a first come first served basis. We will make this allocation at the point when Forestry Commission Scotland approves each SFGS contract. Once the entire Locational Premium for the year has been allocated we will not accept further applications. For planting new woodlands, landowner consent will be required and it may also be necessary to gain Crofters Commission approval. Note: work must be completed in the claim year specified.

How will applications be assessed?

The Forestry Commission will assess all applications in the usual way against the SFGS standards. Applications for **Theme 1** will also be assessed against the criteria listed above.

The applications for **Theme 2** will be treated in a new manner. The assessment of the benefits arising from a proposal to extend the forest network is complex, and specialist software will be employed. The intention is to use a series of 'surgeries' to assess the proposals. FCS staff (with technical/specialist support from Highland Birchwoods and Forest Research) will evaluate proposals along with applicants. Alternatives can be explored, and an early indication of acceptability given to applicants.

To qualify for the locational premium, the new woodland must:

- Be of a native species/non-native species mix appropriate to the site conditions (as corroborated by Ecological Site Classification and the Native Woodland Model analyses) which contributes to local Biodiversity Action Plan priority woodland habitats and/or species;
- And create a viable and best value link between existing native woodland Forest Habitat Networks as determined by analysis using a network evaluation tool from the

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BEETLE (Biological and Environmental Evaluation Tools for Landscape Ecology) suite of tools developed by Forest Research and partners.

To ensure best value network links, applications will be assessed by both the area of new woodland created and the consequent increase in network size. To qualify for the locational premium, the ratio of new woodland in relation to the size of the network area created must exceed threshold values as detailed below.

Large woodland creation schemes linking only small networks will attract limited payment or may not be eligible, whereas small schemes linking large networks will attract proportionately higher payments.

Table 2

“New habitat score” i.e. total area of habitat in new network (ha) minus largest area of habitat in existing networks (ha)	“Proportionality” i.e. “new habitat score” divided by area of new woodland planted (ha)	Size of new woodland eligible for premium (ha)	Comment
5	1.5	None	If these minimum scores are not reached, then the scheme is not eligible
5 - 50	≥1.5	Up to 20	Premium payable on up to 20 ha of new woodland planted, but proportionality means that ‘new habitat score’ needs to be one and a half times as big as new area planted*
50 - 200	≥3	Up to 50	Premium payable on up to 50 ha of new woodland planted, but proportionality means that ‘new habitat score’ needs to be three times as big as new area planted*
200+	≥4	Up to 100	Premium payable on up to 100 ha of new woodland planted, but proportionality means that ‘new habitat score’ needs to be four times as big as new area planted*

*** The size of the new woodland eligible for premium will be based on an amount that contributes towards the Forest Habitat Networks. This will be agreed with the Woodland Officer during the consultation.**

When should I start work?

You can start work as soon as you have received a signed SFGS contract from Forestry Commission Scotland which confirms that you have been allocated Locational Premium. If you have also applied for SFGS Farmland Premium you must also have received SFGS Farmland Premium approval before starting work.

How will the Locational Premium be paid?

You can claim the full SFGS payment for protection and ground preparation as soon as you complete the work. Payments for planting are made in two instalments; 70% when the operation has been satisfactorily carried out and 30% five years later. We will pay the full amount of Locational Premium along with the first (70%) payment for planting. We will not process a claim for part of a compartment. However you need not claim for all compartments at the same time. Claims must refer to agreed claim years in the contract.

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Where can I get more information?

For further information on the Highland Locational Premium and advice on tree planting and grant applications contact Forestry Commission Scotland at the following address (or go to our website at www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland):

Forestry Commission Scotland
Highland Conservancy, Fodderty Way, Dingwall IV15 9XB
Tel: 01349 862144
Fax: 01349 866624
E-mail: highland.conservancy@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

For further information on the assessment of Theme 2 contact:
Phil Baarda at
Highland Birchwoods, Littleburn Road, Munloch, Ross-shire IV8 8NN
Tel: 01463 811663
Fax: 01463 811607
E-mail: phil.baarda@highlandbirchwoods.co.uk
and from the forest habitat network page on www.highlandbirchwoods.co.uk

The Forest Research web site also has further background information on habitat networks:
www.forestresearch.gov.uk/esc
www.forestresearch.gov.uk/habitatnetworks

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