



National Forest Land Scheme

Application Form for
Community Acquisition
and the Sponsored
Sale of Surplus Land

Application Form

Introduction

Please read the relevant parts of the National Forest Land Scheme Guidance before completing this form. See www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls for the guidance and further information.

Please answer all the questions. You can attach additional information as extra sheets or electronic documents. Please be specific. When answering the questions do not repeat any information you have already given, simply refer to an earlier answer or attached document.

The level of information you provide should be proportionate to the significance of the land. See page 9 of the guidance for further information.

You can complete this form electronically but you must print it off and send us a signed form. If you have completed the form electronically, please also send us an electronic copy. You can choose to send your supporting documents as electronic documents only.

Please return the completed form and supporting documentation to:

National Forest Land Scheme Team
Forestry Commission Scotland
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

E-mail: fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

You will receive an e-mail within 7 days acknowledging receipt of your application. We may need to ask you for more information during the application process

Application Form

Section 1 – About your organisation

General Contact Details for Your Organisation		
1.1 Name of Community Body (CB) (or unincorporated association if applying under the Sponsored Sale of Surplus Land)		
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Full postal address for your organisation		
Address Nith Valley LEAF Trust		
Postcode		
Telephone	Fax	
Email		
Your organisation's website www.nithvalley.org .		
1.2 Title and full name of the main contact in your organisation		
Title Mr	First Name Mike	Surname Steele
Position held in your organisation		
Director		
Address for correspondence, if different from the organisation address		
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone		
Email		
1.3 Title and full name of the Chairperson of your organisation		
Title Mr	First Name Guy	Surname Willoughby
Address for correspondence, if different from the main contact address		
Address I		
Postcode		
Telephone		
Email		

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1.4 What is the purpose of your organisation?

Briefly explain the main purpose of your organisation, and what activities and services you undertake. 100 word maximum.

NVLT is a new educational charity designed to:

- Strengthen local community facilities and services
- Make the community sustainable by acquiring resources to invest in community activities
- Encourage people to become healthier

It will do this by:

- acquiring and managing community land & property and recreational facilities/activities.
- advancing the education of the Community about its environment, culture & heritage.
- advancing, improving & conserving the natural environment.
- encouraging and developing a spirit of volunteering.
- organising training & events.
- promoting and carrying out research.

1.5 What type of organisation are you?

Description		Documents to be enclosed
Company Limited by Guarantee (required under Community Acquisition) Yes – please tick	Yes	Memorandum and Articles of Association
		Certificate of Incorporation
Unincorporated Association Yes – insert date established		Constitution / Set of Rules

1.6 Does your organisation have charitable status?

Yes – please tick	yes	No – please tick		
If yes, please give your registered Inland Revenue Charity Number and provide a copy of your letter of recognition.				

1.7 How many voting members does your organisation have? (see Criteria 1, p11 of the Guidelines)

25

1.8 How many members does your management committee, Board of Directors or equivalent have?

5 Directors Plus Accountant & Solicitor

Please enclose a brief résumé of each of your committee or Board members

1.9 Do local directors/committee members have control of your organisation? (see Criteria 1, p11)

Yes – please tick	Yes	No – please tick		
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1.10 Please tell us about your community.

We need you to describe your community to allow us to decide whether you have demonstrated community support for the application (see Criteria 3, p13). You must include the location, population size, and a description of your community. This must also include a geographical definition such as community council boundaries, electoral wards, or postcode unit maps. Please also tell us who your neighbouring communities are. 300 words maximum.

The population of your community	c650
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The community covered by NVLT is defined as Post Code DG3 5J and 5H. The parish runs from the River Nith across the valley floor and up the east Side of the Nith valley. Closeburn is bounded by rural parishes to the west (Keir and Penpont), to the south (Auldgirth) and east (Ae). Thornhill village (pop 2000) is in nearest larger village to the north and contains a variety of small shops, businesses, sports and social facilities and Wallace Hall Academy, the secondary school. Dumfries (pop 33,000) lies 12 miles south.

There are 473 people on the electoral role with an approximate total population of 650. There are three main settlements, Closeburn Village, Cample and The Park/CroalChapel. The remaining residents live in scattered cottages and farms. The parish centres on its church and primary school (3 teachers and nursery) which are adjacent but just out of Closeburn village which contains the village shop and village hall. The village is on the main Dumfries to Thornhill A76 road. The Nith Valley railway line runs parallel to the A76 but has no functioning station so public transport is by bus.

The area is predominantly one of livestock farming but with significant forestry areas on the east side (Forest of Ae). The dairy farms are in the valley with sheep & beef higher up. The community has a very strong link with the land and a number work in agriculture and forestry. There has also been a significant influx of people over many years that have brought in positive skills and new enterprises that range from design & publishing to vintage tractors and furniture making. Otherwise most people work in Dumfries or Thornhill and commute. There are also a large number of tourists who pass through en route along the A76 to attractions elsewhere.

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Section 2 – The land that you want to acquire

2.1 Please give the name and location of the land you want to acquire.

You must attach a map clearly showing the land and outlining the boundaries in red (Forestry Commission Scotland will provide you with a copy of the map that you can submit).

Clauchrie Forest, Closeburn, Dumfriesshire (grid ref NX 925895)

2.2 What is the size of the property in hectares?

Hectares 235.69

2.3 Do you wish to lease, or own the land? Please tick one only

Lease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ownership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/>

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2.4 Please describe how the community has “a substantial connection with the land” (Criteria 3).

The community should be situated by, near to, or on, the land. This could also include a description of how the community currently accesses or uses the land and other community interests in the land. 300 words maximum

Clauchrie Forest is 2.5 miles from Closeburn Village and thus part of the parish and community. Members of the steering group for the feasibility study and of the Trust live adjacent to the woodlands and the area was farmed by grandparents of one family living in The Park (one of the parish settlements). Community residents use the woodlands for walking and as part of a route for trekking on the hills above the woodland. The D&G Council are currently establishing a core path (No 4442) through the forest.

As the forest is between 80 and 300 metres above seas level and on the side of the valley it is clearly visible to most residents in the parish.

2.5 Tell us why your organisation wants to acquire the land?

Please give a brief outline of your plans for the land including the long term objectives you wish to achieve, and how you will manage the land differently. 300 words maximum.

This initiative will help regenerate communities in Mid-Nithsdale by providing resources and new opportunities for building social and financial capital. It will strengthen links within and between communities so making them more self reliant and sustainable. This project will generate a new flow of voluntary activity and encourage residents to become healthier by getting out into their environment.

The community want to develop to woodland in 2 parts.

The area visible from the valley with its ancient mature beech and pine has topography and accessibility to make an ideal amenity area, suitable for themed trails and viewpoints that the community current lacks. A classroom/activities barn is planned to become the starting point for a variety of circular trails for all abilities. Locals want activities like walking, biking, orienteering, riding and different interpretation areas for wildlife, trees and plants and arts and crafts. The area is already known for deer, red squirrels, otters and raptors and the community wish to protect and enhance this biodiversity by planting species that will encourage more flora and fauna.

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The activity barn would be used for a variety of social & educational activities (music, galas, skills training, school visits) and as an interpretation centre for schools who would use it as part of the new Scottish curriculum for excellence.

The second part of the woodlands is slightly more remote but contains conifers with excellent yield potential. Most trees are relatively young so the management plan would be retained to provide longer term income from timber after 2020. Opportunities exist to sell thinnings as firewood and biomass and use some for bridges, stiles and signage. The area would also become a training resource for Barony College forestry students as the college would become a major stakeholder in the project.

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Section 3 - Demonstrating Community Support

3.1 If the land has a market value of less than £50,000 please provide evidence of community support, eg petition, ballot, attendance record and minutes of public meeting (if more than £50 000 go to 3.2).	
3.2 Where the land has a market value of £50,000 or more, a ballot is required to demonstrate community support. Please provide the following information.	
a. Date of ballot.	21 May 2009
b. Question which was put to ballot.	Do you want closeburn community to proceed with a bid to acquire caluchrie woodlands from the forestry commission?
c. Number of people eligible to vote.	473
d. Number of eligible people who voted, including details of the number of proxy votes.	285
e. Percentage of those eligible to vote who voted (d/c x 100) =	60.25%
f. Number of eligible people who voted in favour of acquiring the land.	265

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g. Percentage of those voting, that voted in favour (f/d x 100) =	92.98%
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3.3 Name and contact details of organisation making the ballot return		
Title Ms	First Name Karen	Surname Lewis
Address Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Services		
Postcode		
Telephone		
Email		

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Section 4 - Capacity to Manage Land

You must be able to show that the organisation has the capacity to sustainably manage the land in the long term (see Criteria 5, p14).			
4.1 Business Plan			
For all applications to acquire land with a market value of more than £50,000 a business plan will be required			
4.2 Business Plan attached			
Yes – please tick	yes	No – please tick	

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4.3 Please tell us how your organisation has the capacity to manage the land. For example the skills and experience of members of your organisation, your organisation's track record of managing land or other businesses, your intended use of professional advice, and your plans to manage the land. Maximum 300 words. Please attach any additional documents.

The five directors of the trust are currently:

- **A local dairy farmer**
- **A local businessman with strong community links.**
- **The MD of a large de-mining charity that turns over \$50M annually and employs 7500.**
- **CEO of an educational scientific charity that specialises in organising conferences in the UK and overseas.**
- **A retired policeman.**

The Treasurer is a retired accountant from ICI and chair of the local Princes Scottish Youth Business Trust. The Company secretary is the Trust's solicitor.

All the current directors live in the defined Trust area (DG3 5H&J) so promoting good communications. The directors have extensive relevant experience and skills which covers financial expertise, communication skills, admin & people management abilities, ability to assess risk, ability to motivate, technical skills relevant to land use, organisational skills relevant to running educational and training events and technical skills relating to many of the operations that would be undertaken in the commercial and amenity parts of the woodland like building, construction and road maintenance.

The accountant brings strong financial and administrative skills as does the MD and CEO. Others have excellent office, computing, administrative and secretarial skills. The group has excellent networks at both local and national level which would be used to bring expertise in as required.

Members of the steering group have strong technical skills in forestry, training and teaching at college and school level.

The local community includes residents with skills in arts & crafts, woodwork, agriculture & timber, design, websites, teaching, media & photography which can be applied on the woodlands. Closeburn Community Council is a member Community Woodlands Association (CWA) and the feasibility study has been overseen by the Borders Forest Trust (BFT).

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Section 5 – Showing that your plans for the land will provide additional benefit, are consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and are in the public interest

Acquisition should achieve a range of additional public benefits for the community. These can be listed as economic, social and environmental benefits (but may not involve all of these). The benefits will come from your planned activities and outputs. In addition the land to be acquired should be sustainably used or developed. See Criteria 6 and 7, pp14-15.

5.1 What economic benefits will the land acquisition bring to you and the wider community?

Economic benefits might include new jobs, greater job security, benefits from tourism income generation, timber sales or processing, a wider mix of economic activity in your area, development of renewable energy schemes etc. 300 words maximum.

Longterm

Larger economic community benefits come only after 2020 when there will be significant mature timber sales (Sawn logs & pallet). Before then income will come from thinnings (firewood, timber sales) and from biomass if an energy project starts in Closeburn.

Medium term

Some income will come from amenity sales of Christmas trees & bird/bat boxes

Short term

The main source of income in the first few years will come from grants:

- GCA, Big Lottery for revenue & capital (Classroom/equipment)
- SDRP to manage the forest & develop amenity
- Chairites to run events/build paths
- SNH for biodiversity enhancement
- fees for events/training in the woodland

Jobs

The woodland will employ one part time manager for years 1-3 and then use other partimers. Clauchrie will encourage more tourists to the Closeburn & Thornhill area with positive affects for local accommodation, food providers & shops. It will provide resources for firewood/biomass providers working in partnership with NVLT.

Training & teaching

Training provision by Barony College, and D&G biodiversity and ranger teams will enhance Closeburn as the location for vocational student & adult training. There is a 7000 pupil audience for the woodland classroom as a significant teaching resource under the new Scottish curriculum for excellence.

Biomass energy project

An opportunity exists to develop a district heating system in a new housing estate in Closeburn Village using biomass from the woodlands.

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5.2 What social benefits will the acquisition bring?

Social benefits might include greater community involvement, development of affordable housing, and increased recreation and access benefits for particular groups within the community (eg young or old people, unemployed, disabled). 300 words maximum.

Social benefits are detailed in the business plan.

Clauchrie Woodlands will provide:

- A safe natural amenity for locals to walk, ramble, ride and cycle instead of using the public road network. It could become a venue events like charity walks and woodland events.
- Opportunities for volunteers of all ages/abilities to work together so enhancing social cohesion.
- A venue for schools, colleges, groups and individuals to undertake teaching as part of the curriculum for excellence & vocational training which will strengthen community leaning & expertise.
- Attract tourists & visitors to walk, ride and run and thus enhance interact with locals and others so enhancing diversity and equality.
- An environment & opportunities for artists, musicians, craft workers to interact with each other and the environment

A Biomass energy district heating system in Closeburn Village and firewood supply:

- Creates expertise local in biomass heating/renewable energy and provides sustainable heating for local housing from sustainable supplies
- Reinforces local supply businesses
- Provides fairly priced heating supplies for locals.

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5.3 What environmental benefits will the project bring?

Environmental benefits might include improvements to the way in which the land is managed, habitat benefits, improved deer control, protection or enhancement of archaeological features etc. 300 words maximum.

A recent report by the D&G Biodiversity officer shows that Clauchrie has significant potential to improve biodiversity under the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

The area is already known for deer, red squirrels, otters and raptors and the community wish to protect and enhance biodiversity as part of the amenity provision. This will include

- Maintaining age class diversity: Clauchrie has a good diversity of conifers species and ages, including pines, spruces and larches, which support a greater range of wildlife species.

Increasing tree species diversity by expanding the areas of native trees: There is great potential to extend deciduous tree plantings into coniferous areas on higher slopes.

- Clearing invasive species

Clauchrie has some bracken on some of its lower slopes. This invasive species can provide a serious threat to biodiversity and will be controlled.

- Management of open space

Clauchrie has open spaces left after restocking which will be extended. There is a good network of open vegetated forest roads and rides. These will be kept clear so they receive enough sun to encourage butterflies/insects.

Including woodland edges.

There are old Ash trees on the adjoining land that are approaching 'veteran status' which is very valuable for invertebrates and lichens.

Encouraging Mammals, Reptiles & birds

Otters are found in the River Nith and tributaries like Clauchrie burn on the woodland boundary. Red squirrels are also seen around Clauchrie Forest which acts as a barrier to invading grey squirrels. NVLT will liaise with the local Rangers to ensure a co-ordinated approach to prevent greys spreading. Adders & Slow Worms exist in the area. Bird & bat boxes will be built and placed.

Supplying firewood and biomass from a local sustainable woodland will reduce the carbon footprint of residents by reducing transport lengths.

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5.4 Tell us how you will deliver these economic, environmental, or social benefits.

What projects or outputs will bring these benefits about?

Tell us about the capital costs involved in the delivery of the projects, and how these will be met. Please refer to any plans or other documents you are submitting. Please also identify the risks of the project not delivering, and how these risks will be managed. Please attach any additional documents. 300 words maximum.

Full details on how NVLT will deliver the benefits are given in the attached business plan. As expressed in the ballot the community is committed to delivering this plan and thus achieving the projects outputs and aims.

NVLT's emphasis in the first 5 year period is on using grant income to develop the amenity side of the project to bring major social and environmental benefits as outlined above. Economic benefits will gradually grow from small enterprises that include firewood and biomass energy. Only after 2020 will enough mature timber be available to provide significant income. A limited amount of employment will result from the project.

A SWOT analysis attached.

5.5 Do you intend to apply to have forest land independently certified eg. under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme?

Yes – please tick	yes	No – please tick	
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5.6 What negative economic, social, or environmental consequences (if any) may occur as a result of your plans for the land?

There are no major negative consequences that are likely to occur from this project. Currently the community derive limited or few economic, social or environmental benefits from Clauchrie woodlands.

Care is needed to ensure a succession of project leaders and volunteers come forward after the initial group retires to avoid any loss of development of the woodlands.

5.7 How would you propose to minimise these?

NVLT as a community company limited by guarantee will ensure that the project managed professionally. The directors have been selected for their knowledge, expertise and strong links with community. Members of NVLT will be recruited from a wide range of backgrounds and ages to reinforce community involvement & commitment.

A professional part time project manager will be employed for the first phase of the project to ensure delivery. (see job description attached)

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5.8 Please tell us why your acquisition of land would be in the public interest. 300 words maximum.

This project will:

- o Strengthen local community facilities and revitalize services**
- o Enhance community sustainability by bringing resources to invest in community projects**
- o make people healthier and stronger**

Communities like Closeburn want to retain identity and independence. This project will help bring the Nith Valley community together at a time when it is losing facilities like garages, shops and businesses. It will help to maintain village activities & pride.

It will provide enhanced AMENITY

- o A natural place managed by locals for walking, rambling, biking, riding, and events which would become a social and tourist focus.**
- o Opportunities for volunteers to improve the biodiversity - more wildlife, birds, red squirrels, and native trees.**
- o The retired, disabled and disadvantaged would be able to enjoy the amenity through specially designed trails.**
- o an environment for outdoor arts and crafts, and a place of tranquillity for remembrance and thought**
- o Both young and old would have education & training opportunities. Wallace Hall Academy and Closeburn Closeburn Primary are the nearest schools but there are 5 secondaries and 32 primaries with 30 minutes travel time. They would have a permanent educational resource for teaching a range of topics including environmental resources and biological sciences. This fits the new Scottish Curriculum of Excellence. The Barony College will provide training in forestry skills for students and adults. A specially built activity barn and classroom will become the hub for activities.**

COMMERCIAL

- o Significant quantities of timber will be available for sale after 2020. Before then there are revenue earning opportunities from providing firewood and biomass. A district heating system may be developed for new houses in Closeburn Village. Surplus monies would be available for community projects on recreation, sports and social activities.**

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5.9 Links to other strategies

How will your plans support or compliment local/regional/national strategies?

The application should take into account local strategies and community plans.

100 words maximum.

The plans are consistent with the D&G local plan for Nithsdale.

There is excellence potential to contribute to many of the D&G Local Biodiversity Action Plan themes (LBAP 2009).

Clauchrie Woodlands is adjacent to the Thornhill Uplands Regional Scenic Area and would thus enhance its status.

It would also contribute to a number of the objectives of the Scottish Forestry Strategy including mitigating climate change, improving biodiversity and efficiency of timber production.

D&G Core path 4442 will come through the woodland.

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5.10 It will be helpful to show that you have gained the support of key stakeholders and user groups for your proposals, including site users from outwith the immediate community.

You can show this through letters of support from local authorities, relevant government agencies, and local community groups or using Scottish Land Fund endorsement forms. Please submit any letters of support or endorsements with your application and record them on the checklist.

Copies of letters of support are attached with this application

Penpont Community Council

Closeburn Parent Council

Closeburn Primary School

Wallace Hall Academy, Thornhill

Mona Parr, British Horse Society

SNH, Dumfries

Biodiversity Officer D&G Council

Barony College

Criminal Justice Social Work Dumfries

David Mundell, MP (Dumfriesshire Clydesdale, Tweeddale)

Michael Russell, MSP South of Scotland

Elaine Murray, MSP Dumfries

Michael Thomson, Councillor

David McKie, Councillor

John Charteris, Councillor

Alistair Witts, Councillor

Graham Bell, Councillor

Jeff Leaver, Councillor

Finishing Your Application

Applicant Signature

An Office Bearer of the applicant organisation should sign this declaration. It must be a different person to the main contact given in Section 1.

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Part of the information that you give us will be held electronically. It will be used for administering and analysing applications.

I declare that:

The information given in this application and in any other documentation that supports this application is accurate.

Title Mr	First Name David	Surname Dick
Position held in your organisation	Director	
Date 20 July 2009	Signature	

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Contact

The National Forest Land Scheme Team
Forestry Commission Scotland
National Office
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

Tel: 0131 334 0303

Fax: 0131 316 6152

E-mail: fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

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