

Challenge Fund for the Management of Woodlands In and Around Towns

Questions and Answers (Updated Feb 2006)

Section 1, General eligibility criteria for WIAT.

Q1.1, Will it be possible to get advice ahead of submitting an application?

Yes, early informal contact with a Woodland Officer would be advised to save time at the later stages of the application.

Q1.2, There is a criterion of 40% woodland cover. Can, for example, amenity parkland be included in this?

The application area must comprise at least 40% woodland. Areas linking woodland under the same ownership will potentially be considered for certain operations, relating, for example, to public access as this could benefit the public interest. Parkland would not normally be eligible. Seek advice from a Woodland Officer at an early stage if in any doubt.

Q1.3, Can several areas be amalgamated to make up 1.0 ha?

Yes, although the minimum area of each woodland must be at least 0.25ha, and at least one woodland must be 1ha in size.

Q1.4, If there is one area greater than 1.0ha could smaller areas be included e.g. small riparian remnant woodlands.

Yes, so long as the area of each individual woodland is at least 0.25ha

Q1.5, Can Local Authorities apply for Challenge Funding for street trees?

No. The WIAT CF is designed to encourage the management of woodlands. For this reason there is a minimum eligible area of 1ha for the application. It is unlikely that amalgamated lines of street trees, even if greater than 1ha in area, would be viewed by the judging panel as eligible.

Q1.6, Is the 1km threshold a flexible criterion?

No, at least half of the eligible area must lie within 1km of an urban area. These are defined on GIS shape files and will be made available on the FC website on the Land Information Search. Applicants can also contact their Woodland Officer who will be able to confirm eligibility.

Q1.7, If there is an existing grant in place for woodland operations is it possible to submit a Challenge Fund application for additional works?

Operations already included within an existing WGS or SFGS contract cannot be funded by the WIAT Challenge Fund. Any 'new' operations not included

within an existing contract could be considered as part of a Challenge Fund application. If there is a contract in place for woodland operations but work has not commenced then it is possible to reapply for both SFGS and WIAT Challenge Funding.

Q1.8, At what point do recent woodland plantings become 'existing woodland', and therefore eligible areas under this grant?

Normally woodlands over 10 years of age would be eligible. Certain operations not already the subject of existing FC grant contracts may be considered eligible for younger woodlands (e.g. early respacing, the removal of fly-tipping and subsequent prevention measures, recreation works etc.)

Q1.9, Some urban forestry management projects might comprise land in multiple ownership. Is it possible for adjacent owners to make a joint WIAT CF application?

A project would normally involve a single management plan. If the project included land under more than one ownership then more than one SFGS / WIAT CF application should be made relating to the separate ownerships.

Q1.10, Many new towns have extensive areas of conifer woodlands, which are difficult to market for timber. Can operations for the uneconomic removal of conifers be included in applications for WIAT Challenge Funding?

Yes. It is recognised that the removal of conifers from many urban woodlands may not be commercially viable.

Q1.11, Is woodland around a new development eligible for WIAT Challenge Funding?

Yes, however please note that whilst woodland operations that are a condition of planning consent are currently now eligible for FC grant funding, those associated with housing must demonstrate a high level of public benefit.

Q1.12, Can school grounds be entered into a WIAT application?

We would look at these applications very carefully if the WIAT eligibility criteria are met in consultation with local education authorities.

Q1.13, Is a collection of private gardens eligible for WIAT?

No. The minimum area for WIAT per landholder is 1ha. As public access is a requirement of WIAT private gardens are unlikely to qualify.

Q1.14, Is reclaimed land with existing woodland on it eligible for WIAT funding?

Yes as long as the eligibility criteria of the WIAT Challenge Fund are fully met.

Q1.15, Are golf courses eligible to receive WIAT funding?

The eligibility criteria must be met, including the requirement for safe public access. This generally rules out golf courses however they will be looked at on a case by case basis.

Q1.16, Is land owned and managed by the Forestry Commission (FES) eligible to receive funding under the WIAT CF?

No. Land owned by the Scottish Executive and managed on its behalf by the Forestry Commission (FES) is not eligible to receive Challenge Funding. In instances where the Forestry Commission (FES) might manage woodland on behalf of say, a local authority, the landowner (local authority) could of course apply for the WIAT CF.

Q1.17, Does all information need to be included in the initial application?

Yes, the application needs to include all operations and costs to work up to "Draft Contract". However additional operations/activities could be applied for in future rounds (e.g. following community participation / consultation and the development of a management plan) using a two stage approach.

Q1.18, Could off site activities such as work packs for schools be included as an eligible operation?

Generally yes, provided it relates to a specific woodland and meets the aim of encouraging learning about woodlands and their management.

Section 2, Surveys & Management plans.

Q2.1, Do we pay for the production of a Management Plan?

Yes, we must have a Management Plan early in the process and would pay towards modification of an existing plan or production of a new plan.

Q2.2, What if the LA has a woodland strategy. Could this feed into the individual applications?

Yes. The presence of a woodland strategy would facilitate a more strategic approach to the identification of woodlands that would offer the greatest range of public benefits. Such an approach would also help stratify the woodlands within single ownerships (eg local authorities) and lead to generically similar operations being included in the same application. A number of generically different applications may ultimately be made over a longer time-scale.

Q2.3, Given the extent and diversity of some woodland ownerships in and around towns, how detailed must each application be with regard to operations in individual woodlands? Can a broad-brush approach be adopted at the application stage?

No. Most operations relate to a given specification and must be identifiable on a map. This approach is necessary to allow the key outputs to be checked prior to releasing the funds. Where there are large, complex areas of woodland to assess for WIAT Challenge Funding, the first stage should be a survey/inventory and the preparation of a management plan. This would identify priorities for action and would feed into the second phase of the process, which would be to specify the individual operations to be applied for

Q2.4, If you have a two-stage application, i.e. 1) for a Management Plan and 2) for subsequent operations, would the approval of the Management plan guarantee funding of the operations?

No, both applications will need to be judged separately.

Q2.5, The accumulated applications will in effect form a database of woodland condition throughout urban Scotland. Is this information to be made widely available?

There is a desire to get a common approach to inventory work and this could feed into such a database. All approved schemes will be publicised and it may be possible to collate and publish other data on the FC website.

Section 3, Community engagement.

Q3.1, Surely local consultation may dictate over what area of a given ownership a WIAT application will apply?

Yes, community engagement is regarded as a very important feature of this grant and it is recognised that this may influence the nature of all the applications.

Q3.2, Would you expect an application to come from a Community Group or be done for them by an Agent?

The application needs to be done by or on behalf of the owner but would score more highly if Communities were involved. The Community group could apply on behalf of the owner in a similar way to an agent so long as the owner agreed and signed the final contract.

Q3.3, Can grant payment be made to a Community Group?

Yes, we will make payment to whoever the owner of the woodland wishes the payment to be made.

Section 4, Applications for new members of staff.

Q4.1, Can staff time be included in the application for WIAT Challenge Funding (e.g. for a ranger service)?

Whilst this is not available under the standard SFGS specifications it is recognised that in certain circumstances the provision of, for example, a new ranger or tree warden post could be an integral part of a delivering the public benefits associated with the Project. For this reason it is possible to apply for WIAT Challenge Funding for relevant staff time. It must be noted however that applications would normally be for funding the creation of new posts and would need to be accompanied by a detailed job specification and linked to additional measurable outputs. Funding towards posts already in existence would not be considered. The application should also explain how the post will be funded at the end of the WIAT period. WIAT applications for posts on their own, applications for posts seeking more than 50% funding from FCS funds and those lasting less than 3 years are unlikely to be supported.

Q4.2, In situations where a number of woods require Warden input would it be possible to create a full time post?

Yes, potentially this could work. Each scheme would need to stand-alone however, and each application would need to detail the exact Warden input that relates to the subject woodland.

Section 5, Funding

Q5.1, Are there any restrictions on where additional funding (non-FCS funding) comes from?

Yes. Non government funding can be 'matched' by the Forestry Commission grants (e.g. Heritage Lottery Funding, Local Authority funds etc.). It is not possible however for the FC to 'match' other government funding, such as that from SNH if paying for the same aims, objectives or operations.

Q5.2, If my costs for an operation are greater than those shown on the Standard Costs can I claim the extra cost? For example fencing or footpaths.

Any additional costs should be shown on the grant calculator against a WIAT entry. For example Activity Type 108 has an SFGS standard cost of £16.20 per metre if the actual cost is £20.00 then £3.80 could be costed and shown on the WIAT entry on the grant calculator.

Q5.3, Is there a maximum intervention rate FCS will consider funding?

Ideally proposals should seek less than 75% FCS contribution to project costs. Applications over this are unlikely to be approved, unless under £10,000 total costs. The funding package must be shown as part of the application.

Q5.4, Is there any requirement to provide receipts or evidence of tenders to support WIAT costs?

There is not a requirement to supply receipts for work carried out. However a single programme of capital works over £10,000 should be supported by text

setting out how the costs have been compiled (eg examples of previous work, tenders etc) and must be subject to a competitive tender if the WIAT application is successful.

Q5.5, If my WIAT application is successful and the tendered costs vary from those set out in the approved application, will the WIAT figures be adjusted accordingly?

The original application should be based on realistic information. The approved WIAT costs cannot be increased over the level approved by the judging panel. If the results of the tender lower costs, the WIAT amount will be reduced accordingly. The results of the tender should be made available and discussed with Conservancy staff to agree the final WIAT amount.

Q5.6, If applying for a challenge bid in the last round (July 2006) is there still opportunity to spread the operations over four years?

No, at present WIAT funding has only been allocated until financial year 07/08.

Q5.7, There could potentially be a lot of work involved in the application procedure with no guarantee of funding. If there is excessive demand is it possible that further funding would be made available?

There has been considerable interest shown in this incentive since its launch in 2004. The total Fund available has been increased by £1million to £4.5 million (this is in addition to SFGS Stewardship funding.)

Q5.8, Is the £4.5 million “top up” or total grant?

The £4.5 million is in addition to the standard SFGS payments.

Q5.9, Could additional costs such as supervision, Health and Safety considerations, machine storage etc be included?

Yes, additional costs are recognised in WIAT.

Q5.10, Will the WIAT funds be dispersed equally throughout Scotland, geographically or by scheme size? If so will this affect the amount of grant per area or scheme?

Award will be based on the scoring system and best value for money.

Q5.11, Is there any capping or scope for limiting bids?

No, judging will be based on the scoring system and best value for money, however the judging panel may decide to add conditions to any offers of grant made.

Q5.12, Is there any guidance on what might be a realistic bid, the example looks unreasonably high at £10k/ha?

The judging panel will assess applications based on value for money and public benefit, not necessarily on a rate per hectare.

Q5.13, At claim submission, is there a requirement to provide evidence of expenditure?

No (so long as the work has been completed to the agreed standard).

Q5.14, Can project management fees, contingencies and anticipated work be included as part of WIAT applications?

No, these are all ineligible costs.

Q5.15, Can 'WIAT additional costs' be claimed against SFGS establishment grants?

No,

Q 5.16, What can be counted as match funding?

Confirmed contributions from partners eg HLF, Leader, Local Authority budgets, etc can be considered as eligible match funding. Existing staff time, contributions in kind are **not** eligible to be considered as match funding.

Q5.17, How is partnership funding shown on the grant calculator?

The revised grant calculator details only the funding requested from the Forestry Commission. Partnership funding should be detailed in the application text.

Q5.18, Can capital and revenue funds be applied for under the WIAT Challenge Fund?

Yes. This is where a SFGS / WIAT management plan is valuable in setting out the longer-term maintenance commitments. It is normal for a management plan to detail works over an initial 5 year period, with outline works programmed for 10 years. Potentially WIAT can pay for capital investments with longer-term maintenance operations paid for under the standard SFGS.

Q5.19, As gaining WIAT funding is a competitive process, and each application is judged for value for money, how much would a management plan of an urban woodland be expected to cost?

This depends entirely on the complexity of the woodland. If the subject of the application were a large, homogenous woodland, with few complexities, then it would be expected that it could be surveyed and a management plan

produced for relatively much less than for a complex network of small woodlands of differing type, with differing threats and prescriptions. Ultimately it is for the applicant to determine how much to apply for under WIAT and to provide the necessary justification to convince the judging panel that the best value for public money is being achieved.

Q5.20, Can you include Public Liability Insurance for volunteers in the costs?

Yes.

Q5.21, Can volunteer time in kind, be included as 'additional funding'?

No.

Q5.22, Is there a deadline for grant claim submissions?

Yes, claims must be submitted by the 28th February each year. Operations must be paid for in the financial year approved.

Section 6, Information available.

Q6.1, Is it possible for an applicant to access the map showing the location of eligible areas (1km around settlements of 2k) on the Internet?

Yes, this information is available on the FC website using the Land Information Search (LIS.) This defines accurately all the eligible areas.

Section 7, Consultation

Q7.1. Are applications for WIAT funding subject to consultation?

Yes if the application includes felling, or if there are sensitivities or designations. However, we encourage applicants to consult all stakeholders as a matter of course during the process of working up the application.

Section 8, Scoring your application

Q8.1, Will an unsuccessful applicant be able to view the completed score sheet to determine the reason for the unsuccessful bid?

No, the decision of the judges is final and there will be no appeals process for unsuccessful bids. However, unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback on judges' consideration of the bid.

Q8.2, Will the scoring system be made available for applicants?

Yes, the scoring system is available on the FC website.

Q8.3, Who will judge the schemes outside Central Scotland?

The Central Scotland Conservancy is leading on the administration of the scheme throughout Scotland. However a specific Judging Panel will carry out the assessment of all applications. Members of this panel are drawn from all over Scotland.

Q8.4, Will Local Authority strategic priority areas be considered in the judging?

Yes, for example, schemes in socially excluded areas or in line with access strategies will score more highly. The onus will be on applicant to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme and to obtain the support of the Local Authority.