

## East of England Forest School Challenge fund

### Background

The Forest School initiative originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s. The aim was to encourage children to learn social, physical and educational skills while encouraging an appreciation and understanding of the environment. By the 1980s it had become an integral part of the Danish early years programme.

### What is Forest School?

Forest School provides an excellent opportunity to bring learning to life, allowing children, young people and adults to explore and learn in a constructive way. This inspirational process increases self-confidence, self-esteem, improves individuals' ability to work co-operatively and counters a lack of motivation and negative attitude towards learning, while offering the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.

The Forest School is a secure area of woodland, which acts as an outdoor classroom where people can explore, investigate and discover the natural environment. Sessions are organised and run by Qualified Forest School Leaders, and while the leader will have a planned a range of potential activities, which might include shelter construction, bridge building, mapping or artwork with natural materials, it is the participants themselves that determine the range and scope of the activities.

Participants are invited to woodland sites where they are supported in their learning, encouraged to explore the outdoor environment and appreciate nature. They use tools and learn boundaries of behaviour both physical and social. It has been found the combination of freedom and responsibility is particularly beneficial to those with little confidence or challenging behaviour. Forest Schools allow participants to grow and discover their abilities without fear of criticism or failure.

Forest Schools provide a valuable teaching tool for a wide range of curriculum subjects, and is an excellent way to support and enrich the National Curriculum. Forest Schools can help develop and learn a range of subjects from Biology and Sciences, Maths, Citizenship, Design and Technology, P.E, Art and English. A non-classroom environment gives children increased stimulation and encourages a greater learning potential. Participants can be involved in a range of activities from Pond and Stream Studies (Reception, Key Stage I and II) to Woodland Ecology (A-Level).

## Forest School East

Forest Schools East is the initiative that will help Forest Schools to develop in the East of England, giving participants in the region the opportunity to explore and learn in their local environment. The aim is to set up Forest Schools throughout the region under the banner of Forest Schools East. For further information see [www.forest-schools-east.org](http://www.forest-schools-east.org).

This is supported by the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) Challenge Fund. The WIG offers schools, sport groups, youth groups, environmental charities and other organisations the opportunity to apply for a grant, which will support setting up a Forest School site.

Forest Schools East also offers training for teachers to investigate and lead their own Forest Schools. This is supported by Green Light Trust, an environment-based Suffolk charity that will provide the training in the region, allowing participants to train and learn in their local environment. For further information see [www.greenlighttrust.org](http://www.greenlighttrust.org).

## The WIG Fund

The Forestry Commission East England Conservancy has secured £100,000 to pilot Forest Schools in the East of England for two years. This WIG fund must be disbursed within financial years 2006-07 and 2007-08.

This funding will enable a series of Forest Schools to be set up in the East of England through single discretionary capital payments. Grants from this fund will be made to successful applicants on completion of the agreed work. The grant will be determined as a proportion of the costs of the agreed project.

Funding will be used to support the infrastructure for Forest Schools. This could include:

- Fencing
- Gates
- Initial Tree Safety Audits
- Remedial arboriculture
- On site storage facilities
- Tools
- Rope
- First aid equipment
- Portaloes
- Wet weather gear
- Training<sup>1</sup>
- Transport
- Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance
- Rucksacks
- Kelly Kettles
- Penknives
- Potato peelers
- Tarpaulin
- Camouflage netting
- Gloves
- Shelter
- Pooters
- Spades
- Nature viewers

## Where does the WIG apply?

The fund will apply in the East of England Government Office region. Projects selected for funding will be spread throughout the region, nominally at least one per county.

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<sup>1</sup> For details of Training Requirements see Annex 1

**What proportion of costs can be paid?**

The aim is to pilot support in a range of locations and situations, therefore it will be necessary to maintain flexibility in the proportion that the Forestry Commission contributes. In practice this is likely to vary from 75-90%, but 100% funding need not be ruled out.

Applications will be judged against a set of public benefit criteria (see Annex 2). Once the application has been assessed we will write to you informing you of the level of grant you will receive. If you are successful in securing a grant we will invite you to confirm how you wish to proceed.

**Is there a time limit?**

The WIG fund is limited to payments in the financial years 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

**Applications must be received by Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2007**, and work must be undertaken and claim submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Failure to complete the agreed work or make the claim before the deadline will mean that no right to the grant will exist. Any payments that may be made in these cases will be at the Forestry Commission's absolute discretion.

**How do I apply?**

Applications must be made on form EWGS 1 and EWGS 5 and submitted with an OS MasterMap® showing the areas for which grant is sought. The EWGS General Guide explains about the maps and how to obtain them free of charge. **In making an application, you should seek to answer all the items listed in Annex 2.**

**When can I claim?**

The grant should be claimed as a lump sum when you have completed all, or the major part of the work agreed in the Contract. You must do all the work agreed and maintain the facilities to our reasonable satisfaction. **The work must be undertaken and your claim submitted by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008.**

**Where can I get more information?**

For further information, please contact:

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Web site: [www.forest-schools-east.org](http://www.forest-schools-east.org)

**The Open College Network (OCN) runs four levels of qualifications. To become a Forest School Leader you will need to have completed OCN unit Level 3 (Forest School Practitioners' Award).**

**OCN Entry Level:**

30 learning hours: An introduction to Forest School for people with additional learning needs.  
 Entry requirements: No qualifications needed  
 Course content: This qualification is for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. It covers practical work in outdoor areas.

**OCN Level 1 – Forest School Skills Award**

30/60 learning hours: An introduction to Forest Schools  
 Entry requirements: An interest in working with people in the outdoor environment  
 Course content: This is a three day course for parents, young people (14-19yrs) adult volunteers, nursery nurses, teachers etc who have an interest in working with young people in the outdoors.

**OCN Level 2- Assistant Forest School Practitioner Award**

60 learning hours: Qualification that will enable you to assist a Forest School leader. Two courses are available; one general and one child-care based  
 Entry requirements: Either Level 1 or previous experience working with chosen client group  
 Course content: This award is for students who wish to assist the Forest School Practitioner. This qualification forms two-thirds of the Practitioners qualification and can be used as prior learning if required

**OCN Level 3- Forest School Practitioners Award**

90 learning hours: Qualification to become a Forest School Leader. Two courses are available; one general, one child-care based  
 Entry requirements: Any level 2 relevant qualification i.e., Forest School, PGCE, CACHE, Play Work, Youth Work, Probation Care, Woodland/ Countryside Management and 2 years experience working with client group with a portfolio including references and evidence  
 What you will be trained to do: This award will enable you to run an alternative complementary curriculum outside. If you have relevant Level 2 qualifications, and are over 21 years old, you can work with your chose client group and run your Forest School independently  
 Course Content: Before the course starts there will be a 2 day 'First Aid in the Outdoors' qualification (ITC) Immediate Temporary Care. The course is approximately 50% practical and 50% theory. The theory content will include elements on Health & Safety, self-esteem, emotional learning, behaviour and identifying natural learning preferences of young people aged between 3 and 18 years.  
 Individuals can chose course elements relating to 0 to 8 years or 8 to 18yrs depending upon their client group or specific specialisms.  
 Approximately three months after the course, participants will attend a 3-day residential course. This will include tutorial time, and further practical training and assessments.  
 After a further 3 months participants will be assessed at a venue of their choice working with their chosen client group.

**ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE A CURRENT AND CLEAR CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU CHECK.**

**Bridgwater College in Somerset has developed a BTEC Award in Forest Schools to give Early-Years practitioners, playgroup workers, playgroup leaders and other professionals who work with children, the chance to take forward outdoor learning and education.**

**BTEC Award in Forest Skills- Level 1 Course**

40 learning hours:	This course is ideal if you wish to support a Forest School Leader
Entry Requirements:	No qualification needed
Course Content:	You will learn to plan appropriate activities and experiences aimed to promote self-esteem, learning and development

**BTEC Award for Forest School Leaders – Level 3 Course**

90 learning hours:	This course is designed to build on previous knowledge and experience of the participants
Entry Requirements:	A Level – One qualification – The BTEC Award in Forest School Skills
Course Content:	The training covers a variety of subjects from child development to Health and Safety.

**This information should be read together with that given in the EWGS 5 Woodland Improvement Grant Guide that accompanies the EWGS 5 WIG form.**

1. On your application map, show the entire woodland area that will be included in the Forest School site, with a Grid Reference for the site access (AB 123 456). Enter the area onto the schedule on the back of form EWGS 1 as a single entry with one reference (e.g. 1a)
2. Fill in the EWGS 5 form...

Sections 1 and 2 as per the EWGS 5 Guide

- Section 3 Set out the following, using a separate sheet of paper, or attach as short report as needed.
- Indicate the distance of the site from the proposed users.
  - Describe the access to the site. Will this be on foot? Is vehicle parking required? What special requirements will be made for disabled users? Is the entire site open to the public or only part?
  - Describe the type of woodland in which the Forest School is to be established. For example, is this young or well-established woodland? Is the woodland ancient?
  - Describe the soil on the proposed site. For example, is it clay or sandy?
  - Give details of planned on-going ecological assessment of the site.
  - Give details of who has Forest School Leader accreditation and will run the Forest School sessions (or details of training underway).
  - How many participants are expected to use the site, what will be the trainer to participant ratio?
  - What groups will be using the Forest School?
  - How often will Forest School Seminars for each group be run?
  - Is the proposal linked to a Forest School Education Initiative Cluster Group?
  - Give details of links to the National Curriculum (if applicable)
  - Give details of any planned evaluation of learning and personal development of those involved in Forest School sessions.
  - Give details of...
    - current or proposed qualifications in First Aid
    - risk assessments required
    - child protection policy
    - emergency procedures
    - appropriate CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) checks
    - Insurance.
- Section 4 Enter here the total cost of your Forest School project, that you seek funding for under this Challenge fund. The Forestry Commission will let you know the level of grant your proposals would attract.
- Column 5 Write "F School"
- Column 6 Leave this blank
- Column 7 Here you need to list the items that make up your costs. You should use the standard costs in the EWGS 5 WIG Guide wherever they are relevant, however few of them will be appropriate to the Forest School WIG Challenge. Where there is not a standard cost for a particular job or task, give it a name and a unique reference (e.g. Wet Weather Gear / FS1).
- Column 8 Enter the units of the standard costs or of your own 'non-standard' cost
- Column 9 Enter the quantity
- Column 10 This is optional – refer to the main EWGS 5 WIG Guide
- Column 11 Write the financial year that you will claim the entire grant
- Column 12 Write the reference that you gave the Forest School area on form EWGS 1
- Column 13 Briefly describe the work and items for which grant is required. In order to give a fuller specifications of non-standard cost items, you should construct a table similar to the table of standard costs shown in the EWGS 5 Guide and attach it to the back of the form. Photocopy the following page of this guide to use for this.



This document is for information only and does not constitute an agreement of any form nor does it confer any rights. It is intended as a guide to help applicants decide whether the grant is applicable to them and whether the main requirements of any grant agreement can be met. The information is subject to change. Full and current details of the grant scheme and the requirements of any EWGS grant contract that may be made between the applicant(s) and the Forestry Commission arising from an application to the grant scheme can be found at [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs)



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