

## English Woodland Grant Scheme

Woodland Improvement Grant

February 2006

West Midlands

**active**woods  
naturally good for you

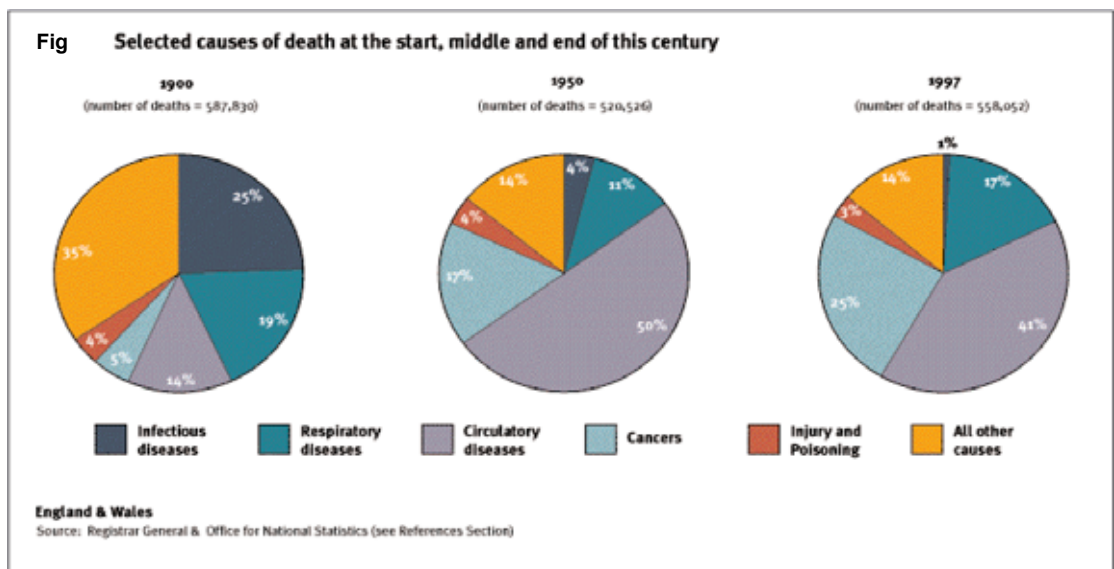
## Woodland & Health Pilot -2006/2007

### Background

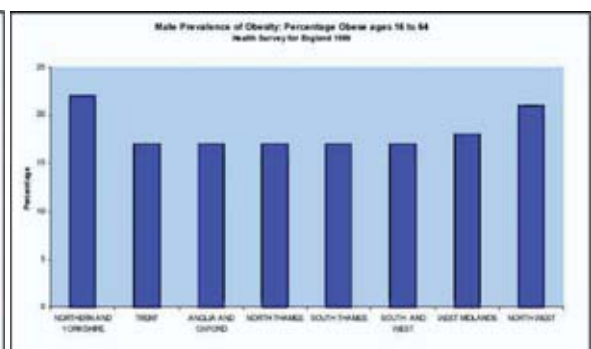
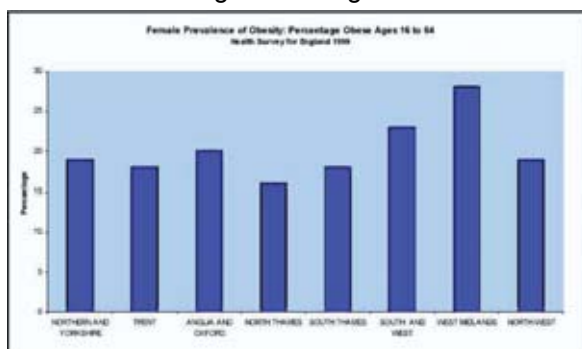
According to the recent national census<sup>1</sup>, 1 in 10 people now consider their general health as 'not good'.

The recent Government White Paper<sup>2</sup>, Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation, flags up a commitment to improve the health of the nation and reflects on how our health has changed over the last 100 years.

The main causes of death and reduced quality of life now are circulatory diseases, cancers and respiratory diseases. Modern life is also prone to increased levels of stress and mental illness, together with obesity, which in turn increases the likelihood of developing circulatory and other diseases, such as diabetes. Together these illnesses impact on the economy through lost days at work and direct costs to the health service.



Prevalence of obesity amongst females is highest in this region and amongst males, third highest in England<sup>3</sup>.



Studies have shown that greater physical activity amongst all of the population, but particularly amongst 'at risk' groups, can:

- Halve all causes of mortality
- Halve coronary heart disease
- Halve strokes
- Decrease high blood pressure by 30%
- Halve type II diabetes
- Decrease colon cancer by up to 40%
- Decrease hip/vertebral fractures by 30-50%
- Reduce stress
- Improve mental/social health
- Reduce the risk of falling and fractures

The Walking Your Way to Health Initiative ([www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)) has successfully demonstrated ways encourage people to undertake regular walks as a means of improving health or aiding recovery from illness. The Forestry Commission has been actively involved in this initiative in the West Midlands through the Forest Enterprise at Wyre Forest:

## Case Study **Wyre Forest Stride & Stroll**

Rosemary Winnall is Education Manager for the Forest Enterprise at Wyre Forest, near Bewdley. She has worked in partnership with the Wyre Forest District Council and the Wyre Forest Primary Care Trust to set up the Wyre Forest Stride and Stroll Walks with funding from the Walking the Way to Health Initiative administered by the Countryside Agency. Volunteer walk leaders have been trained and regular health walks set up in the district. As part of this scheme free health walks take place in the Forestry Commission's woodland in Wyre Forest every Tuesday and Sunday throughout the year. These events benefit the participants not just physically, but also socially, mentally and emotionally.

The Wyre Forest Discovery Centre organises a weekly Forest Friends event for pre-school children and their parents or carers. This morning event encourages children to walk in the woods throughout the year. It also helps accompanying adults to meet new people and have fun in the forest with their children.

Rosemary has worked with local GPs, and the Brambles Bereavement Trust to develop new initiatives in the field of health promotion and mental health. In 2000 the centre was awarded a Year of the Artist Award for the Forest Heart Project to promote health in the forest through the arts. Sculpture, music, drama and poetry were the media used in the project with the general public and school children from the local rural area and from urban Dudley. As a result there is now a permanent Heart Monitor in the porch at the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre for visitors to check their blood pressure, pulse, height, weight and body mass index (an indicator of obesity).



Supported by




## Forestry Commission Woodlands and Health Pilot 2006/2007

The Forestry Commission West Midlands Conservancy has secured £75,000 to extend a woodland-based health pilot in the region under the 'Active Woods' banner, linking with the regional WHI. This will pay for promoting and encouraging health-related activity in woodlands. One of the key indicators is people's perception of their own health. In the recent national Census, almost 1 in 10 responded that their health was 'not good'. Therefore the pilot is being targeted at areas in the West Midlands that ranked poorly for general health in the National Census and where there are already some WHI walk groups established. Target areas have also been selected to tie in with existing woodland initiatives that are able to offer support.

The aim is twofold:

1. to encourage existing, and new, groups of users to use woodlands in developing a healthier lifestyle, and
2. to encourage existing woodland owners within the target areas to link with new and established groups of users and benefit from their experience.

The target areas and WHI contacts are shown below:



Woodland Initiative	Local Authority	WM Rank	% responding 'not good'	WHI contact
<b>Black Country Urban Forest</b> 1	Dudley	8	10.0	Action Heart <b>Russell Titson</b> 01384 230222 <a href="mailto:info@actionheart.com">info@actionheart.com</a>
	Sandwell	2	11.9	Sandwell Stride <b>Lindsay Manford</b> 0121 500 1651 <a href="mailto:lindsay.manford@rrt-pct.nhs.uk">lindsay.manford@rrt-pct.nhs.uk</a>
	Walsall	4	10.9	Walsall Walk On <b>Jeff McBride</b> 0121 360 9464 <a href="mailto:mcbridej@walsall.gov.uk">mcbridej@walsall.gov.uk</a>
	Wolverhampton	3	11.7	Action Zone Office <b>Brabara Howells</b> 01902 444601 <a href="mailto:barbara.howells@wolvespct.nhs.uk">barbara.howells@wolvespct.nhs.uk</a>
<b>Forest of Mercia</b> 2	Cannock Chase	7	10.2	<b>Jan Matthews</b> 01543 370737 <a href="mailto:jan.matthews@staffordshire.gov.uk">jan.matthews@staffordshire.gov.uk</a>
	Lichfield	24	8.1	
	South Staffordshire	23	8.1	
	Walsall	4	10.9	
<b>Greening Growth</b> 3	Stoke on Trent	1	12.8	<b>Siu-ann Pang</b> N Staffs PCT <a href="mailto:Sui-ann.pang@northstaffs.nhs.uk">Sui-ann.pang@northstaffs.nhs.uk</a>
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	6	10.6	
<b>Telford Woods &amp; People</b> 4	Telford & Wrekin	12	9.3	<b>Jenny Stretton</b> 01952 597634 <a href="mailto:jenny.stretton@telford.gov.uk">jenny.stretton@telford.gov.uk</a>

Whilst finding is focussed on these target areas, proposals outside these areas may also be submitted for consideration.

You can apply for grant if you own or manage woodlands, or are involved in running health walks that could be extended to include woodlands, and can act on behalf of the owner of the woodland. The following sections detail how to apply for the grant, which is administered through the Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme.

### References

1. National Census 2001, quoted on [www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nscl.asp?ID=5014](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nscl.asp?ID=5014)
2. Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation at [www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm43/4386/4386-00.htm](http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm43/4386/4386-00.htm)
3. Health Survey for England 1999

## West Midlands Woodland and Health Pilot 2006/2007

### Eligibility

#### DO EXISTING RULES APPLY?

Existing WIG rules apply ie a single discretionary payment to encourage health related activity in woodlands or for activities designed to enhance the value of woodland for health related recreation.

#### WHAT IS THE GRANT FOR?

Work that will help to encourage informal (and formal) health related recreation, linked where possible to a local WHI group. It can be paid to create new health walks or to bring existing walks up to the standard for WHI accreditation. Successful projects will be expected to link to the **Active Woods** campaign; a toolkit is available from the Forestry Commission.

#### WHERE WILL THE PILOT OPERATE?

The pilot will operate only in the West Midlands region.

#### WHERE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS WILL IT BE TARGETED?

This grant is available in the following areas (see map):

- **Greening for Growth project area**
- **Telford & Wrekin Unitary**
- **Forest of Mercia**
- **Black Country Urban Forest (Black Country MBCs)**

Suitable proposals outwith these target areas may also be eligible, at the discretion of the Forestry Commission, if there is a high demand for health related public access (eg linking with other WHI projects).

#### WHAT TYPE OF WORK WILL BE ELIGIBLE?

We will give grant for work that will improve health related access to the woodlands, by providing or improving access for groups with specific health problems (eg mental illness, heart disease) or creating or improving access to woodland based activities intended to promote healthy living. Examples include:

- **holding community involvement events, eg guided walks, promoting the role of woodlands in healthy living**
- **producing publicity (leaflets, adverts, etc)**
- **construction and upgrading of paths (eg improving access for all abilities)**
- **construction of 'trim trails'**
- **providing signs and waymarking paths**
- **removing rubbish**
- **thinning and small scale felling to encourage access and make views more pleasant**
- **making the wood safer for the public**
- **providing seats and picnic areas**
- **creating car parks**
- **enhancing the value of the experience for users eg walk leaders courses**
- **reasonable professional fees for planning and carrying out the work**

#### WHAT PROPORTION OF THE COST CAN BE PAID?

We will agree with you the package of work that needs to be carried out and a reasonable cost for that work. The WIG payment will be 100% of the agreed cost of the work, to a maximum payment of £25,000 for each separate project.

#### IS THERE A TIME LIMIT?

Funds are limited to the financial year April 2006-March 2007 and **work must be undertaken, and your claim submitted by 28 February 2007.**

#### DO I NEED TO USE SIGNS?

We will expect you to put up signs that clearly show that people are welcome to walk in the woodland. We can give you guidance on what is required and provide some suitable signs free of charge as part of our Woodland Welcome initiative.

## HOW CAN I LET PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE WOODLAND IS OPEN?

You must tell us your plans for letting people know that your woodland is open to the public, for example by providing leaflets or articles in local papers. It may be appropriate to hold community involvement events to encourage people to use the woodlands and explain what is available.

## DO I NEED TO PUT IN A CARPARK?

It must be easy for people to visit the woodland. Often there may need to be safe car parking close by. If you plan to build a new car park, or a new access on to a public road, you should discuss this with the local planning authority.

## CAN I MAKE A CHARGE?

We can only pay WIG if you allow the public free access on foot. However, you can make charges where special facilities or services are provided, but we don't expect you to charge for providing all ability access. You may carry out other activities in the woodland so long as these do not interfere with free public access. We will agree when you can close off access for a short time for woodland management.

## Applying

### How do I apply?

This WIG project will be available for a limited period. Because funds are limited the **closing date** for applications is **12pm on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006**. An independent panel will judge applications during June and successful applicants will be notified by the end of that month.

### Which form do I need?

You must complete forms EWGS 1 General Details and EWGS 5 WIG Application. These can be downloaded from [www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs). You must also give detailed information about your plans for giving access to the woodland. The larger the woodland, the more information we will expect you to provide. We will use this to draw up an EWGS contract with you. You will need to apply for the health WIG work as a separate application to other work you might wish to undertake in your woodlands.

### When can I claim?

You should claim the grant as a lump sum when you have completed all, or the major part, of the work agreed in the Contract. We will require you to claim by 28 February 2007. You must do all the work agreed and maintain the recreation facilities to our reasonable satisfaction. We will expect you to allow free public access to your woodland for not less than 10 years. You will need to complete and submit a Monitoring Report along with your final claim. These details, the Scoring Form and the Monitoring Report are available online at [www.forestry.gov.uk/health](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/health)

### Where can I get more information?

If you are interested in applying you should check with your local FC office that your woodland lies in a suitable area and that we are currently accepting applications.

#### Forestry Commission England

#### West Midlands Conservancy

Tel: 01905 362730

Fax: 01905 362731

Email: [fc.wmid.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fc.wmid.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)



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)