

# North East England

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## North East England

### EWGS & Regional Update

#### Update No 14 (17 March 2009)

A theme within this issue is the way climate change is influencing woodland management from research through to providing funds for delivery. First we start with an update on EWGS grants and a reminder to submit applications and claims before the end of the financial year.

#### EWGS Update

When we opened for applications to the 2008 Prospectus in May 2008 we were only able to issue a provisional budget due to delays with the approval of the Rural Development Programme for England. Since May 2008, we have secured some increases to the RDPE funding available for forestry schemes, in part due to the increased value of the Euro compared to Sterling. As a result we still have funds available for RDPE co-financed schemes such as WIG and WMG and we will now remain open for grant applications beyond the original planned closure date of 28 February 2009. This will allow applications to be received and paid in the 09/10 claim year. Please contact your woodland officer if you are considering submitting an EWGS application this financial year. Our non-RDPE grants, the bulk of which are WRG contracts for restocking, are now fully subscribed for payments in FY 2009/10.

Summary of principle changes operating from 1<sup>st</sup> March

Grant Type	Status
Woodland Creation Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will open May 09 for both 09/10 and 10/11 claim years.</li><li>• A new additional contribution of £2000 will be on offer.</li><li>• Reforms allowing the Single Payment Scheme to be claimed on new planting areas will enable autumn planting to take place but FWP will be reduced by an equivalent amount.</li></ul>
Woodland Planning grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open. Payments have been Increased to £20/ha for the first 100 ha and £10/ha thereafter with a minimum payment of £1000.</li></ul>

**Royal Forestry Society**

NE meeting dates

4<sup>th</sup> June

18<sup>th</sup> June

17<sup>th</sup> July

Visit [www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk)

for details

Woodland Improvement Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standard costs have been reviewed with an average increase of 20%.</li><li>• A new cost calculator spreadsheet is available to assist with working up application contributions.</li><li>• The communities access Wig contribution has been increased to 80% of costs in line with our Ancient Woodland and Woodland Bird Wig.</li></ul>
Woodland Management Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open for applications with a first payment in Autumn 2010.</li><li>• Threshold eligibility for those woodlands without certification has been lifted to 100ha although woodlands of between 30 and 100 ha must have an approved Woodland Management Plan.</li></ul>
Assessment Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We remain open for applications for Assessment Grants.</li></ul>
WRG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will open for Woodland Regeneration Grant applications in May.</li></ul>

February and March period is also a busy period for receiving claims, all claims for schemes with a financial claim year of 2008/2009 MUST be submitted before the end of the financial year to be eligible for payment.

If you are about to submit a claim please ensure all work being claimed has been fully completed and that areas are the same as the contract specification. If you are unable to complete the work in time to claim we will consider extending the work schedule if you submit an amendment to us in good time.

**New Woodland Improvement Grants**

During the year the North East Region launched three new Woodland Improvement Grants to encourage the management of woodlands where it will help to deliver a range of target outcomes. These are:

- Community Access 80, encourages community groups to take an interest in their local woods and now contributes 80% towards the cost of work.
- Woodland Bird 80: To address the decline in woodland birds, 80% of costs.
- ASNW WIG: To support positive management of Ancient and Semi Natural Woodlands in poor or declining condition, 80% of costs.

These grants are already proving popular and as a result we have allocated additional funds to them. These grants contribute a high proportion of costs and we are finding that in many cases the outcomes and woodland operations being supported are consistent with the woodland owner's objectives of maximising amenity and timber value.

If you would like to know more about any of these new schemes, please contact your woodland officer or download the guidance note from our regional website: [www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6WMCY7](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6WMCY7).

### **Timber Market Update**

The timber market can be described as steadily improving. Many saw millers and timber importers ran down stocks over the autumn and early winter resulting in stockyards with plenty of gaps. However there is good evidence that many customers, particularly in the red log sector are picking up new orders along with the expansion of existing ones. Sawmill shift patterns look to be returning to normal frequency and demand for timber from state forests throughout all of the English estate is increasing. Saw millers are beginning to look ahead to Easter and the domestic fencing market and are seeking to build stocks of finished product. The Strength of the Euro against the £ is giving British timber a current advantage over imported timber, a position of uncertain duration.

### **Conference – Tackling Climate Change Success**

The Role of Trees Woodlands and Forestry

On November 4<sup>th</sup> 2008 in conjunction with Confor and the Climate Change Partnership a very successful conference was held at St James Park. A lively mix of speakers including some of the country's leading experts on climate change explained to over 80 delegates the range of ways trees and woodlands can help us to adapt to the changing climate. Sandy Greig suggested that an additional 60,000 ha of woodland in the region would compensate for all emissions from agriculture!

### **Border Mires**

The Border Mires project within Kielder is coming to a close, with virtually all the work on the SSSI's completed and work ongoing on the non SSSI mires. This work started in April 2006 and has been completed by various contractors.

To date they have completed.

- 194 hectares of whole tree mulching
- 400 hectares of drain blocking
- 350 hectares of whole tree mulching

The last of the whole tree mulching is taking place at Stotts Crag along with conifer regeneration removal.

The Border Mires Committee has identified the most important non SSSI mires. These non SSSI mires are being targeted for remedial work to allow them to achieve a favourable recovery designation, thus increasing the successful recovery of the Border Mires project as a whole.

The three year project will be completed in March 2009. To celebrate this, various events are being planned for the spring of 2009 with the project partners, Northumberland National Park, Natural England and Cumbria and Northumberland Wildlife trusts.

### **Forest Research Set to Launch New Structure**

Forest Research has been working hard over the past few months to develop a new organisational structure and operating framework capable of delivering the rapidly changing, crosscutting and challenging research requirements of its public and private-sector clients. The goal is to create a robust, market-relevant and flexible organisation with a reputation for innovative applied science and a sustainable economic future. Therefore, at the start of April 2009, Forest Research will launch three new Research Centres to replace the current five divisions. The centres will employ all staff involved in research, development, research support, field surveys, advice and science-related services to UK forestry. These are:

- **The Centre for Forestry and Climate Change**, which will research the effects of environmental and climate change on forestry, and how the sector can play its part in adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. It will also develop entomology, pathology and environmental sciences in order to deliver holistic understanding of climate change and forestry. Andy Moffat will lead this centre;
- **The Centre for Forest Resources and Management**, which will research, develop and provide guidance on methods of quantifying, improving and managing Britain's forest resources in a cost-effective, safe, sustainable and socially beneficial way. It will also provide technical support for field experimentation, monitoring and surveys through Forest Research's field station network. Most of the Technical Services Unit (TSU) will remain together as a unit that will deliver research support, surveys, advisory and related work, and form part of this Centre. The acting Head of Centre is Helen McKay;
- **The Centre for Human and Ecological Sciences**, which will research and develop the role of trees, woodland and forests in society and within integrated sustainable landscapes by applying a broad range of skills from the human and ecological sciences. Chris Quine will lead this centre.

The centres will therefore provide a "home" for scientists and support staff, a focus and context for the work programmes, and a point of contact and extension service for Forest Research's partners and customers. Specific events will be held across Britain later in the year to promote the centres to invited audiences.

### **Research Launches Events Notification Service**

Forest Research has launched a new service that notifies subscribers of new events organised by or involving Forest Research as soon as they are

announced. To subscribe to receive these notifications by email, go to the Forest Research website [Events page](#) (accessible via a link on the home page).

### **Launch of Short-Rotation Forestry Trial in England**

Forestry Commission England has been commissioned by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) to manage a three-year, £1.5 million research project to examine the feasibility of Short-Rotation Forestry (SRF) as a viable source of renewable energy. The project will provide scientific data on hydrology, carbon balance, economic viability and possible environmental risks, such as the impact of SRF on landscape and biodiversity.

There will be six intensive field trials, mainly on agricultural land, using a range of fast-growing species that have shown potential to be used as a biomass energy fuel, including ash, alder (Italian and red), birch, hybrid aspen, sycamore and three species of eucalyptus. These sites will provide data on the environmental effects, growth and carbon balance of the species. Six larger, commercial-scale plantings of Eucalyptus will provide further data on operational techniques and costs. The trial complements a similar series of trials being established in Scotland.

Funding is in place for three years, but one of the objectives is to secure support for further phases of work (through to the end of the first rotation) to assess the long-term potential of SRF.

For more information see [an overview report](#) in the Forestry Commission England area of the Commission's.

### **Bioenergy Programme Grants Up and Running**

The second round of applications to the RDPE bioENERgy programme have now been considered and grants totalling £126,000 have been approved, subject to the provision of additional information and the resolution of some minor issues, to six businesses in the region.

The grants have encouraged investment in biomass supply chains in the North East. Projects in this round have included a woodchip storage and processing hub, a mobile chipper, a small chipper for in-forest wood processing and firewood processing equipment.

A new fast track application process has now been introduced for projects under the value of £20,000. The next application deadline for projects over £20,000 is **31 May 2009**. If you are interested in finding out more about this grant programme please contact Jennifer Hewitson at RDI Northwoods on 01670 790444 or e-mail [jennifer@northwoods.org.uk](mailto:jennifer@northwoods.org.uk). Further details are at [www.northwoods.org.uk/bioenergy](http://www.northwoods.org.uk/bioenergy).

This RDPE funding comes from Regional Development Agency One NorthEast and the programme is run by Rural Development initiatives, via Northwoods.

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## **Forestry Training**

Northwoods is also offering training in woodfuel and chainsaw skills (amongst other things). This training is heavily subsidised through the Lantra Landskills North East programme. It's not just for established businesses - perhaps you're considering a change of career, or want to diversify your skills?

Please contact Pam Baker on 01670 790444 or e-mail [pam@northwoods.org.uk](mailto:pam@northwoods.org.uk) for further information on forestry training opportunities.

## **Ignition 09 Held at The Sage Gateshead 11 -12 march 09**

With wood fuel being identified by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) as being the lowest cost effective way to deliver renewable energy, Ignition09 –was a be a unique opportunity for businesses and organisations to find out more about its benefits and savings both financially and environmentally.

Ignition09 was the UK's first dedicated wood fuel expo and was an essential event for anyone with an interest in heating, energy management or the wood fuel supply chain. It proved a unique opportunity for visitors to find out everything they needed to know about wood fuel and to speak to suppliers, installers and consultants from across the UK and Europe.

For those wanting information on all aspects of woodfuel visit the Northwoods website. [www.northwoods.org.uk](http://www.northwoods.org.uk)

## **Awards For Best in Woodland Projects**

Woodland projects in the region are invited to enter a competition to recognise outstanding woods and green community projects.

The Royal Forestry Society and the Forestry Commission are piloting the Excellence Awards in the region. There are five categories and each has a first prize of £1,000 and runner up award of £500.

The Community Forestry Award marks local projects that provide excellent woodland amenities such as improved access facilities. The Schools Award rewards achievement in teaching pupils more about trees and woodlands. The Duke of Cornwall's Award celebrates multi-purpose forestry. The Farm Woodland Award is for farmers where agriculture is the main income, but where woods are a key part of the business the RFS Silviculture Award recognises excellence in woodland where the main aim is growing timber.

The competition is open to individual companies, schools, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and volunteer groups. Entries close on March 9<sup>th</sup> and the awards will be presented at the Great Yorkshire Show in July. Further details are available from competition co-ordinator Trefor Thompson, Plas canol, Llanrhydd, Ruthin LL15 2UU. Tel 01824 704230 or email [mailto:woodland\\_competition@boyns.net](mailto:woodland_competition@boyns.net).