

Grant Scheme Rescheduling Policy: Guidance for Applicants and Contract Holders

Purpose This note provides guidance on the principles that the FC use to consider amendments to claim year and/or planting year. There is a formal amendment process for agreeing changes to approved contracts and this note is relevant to both EWGS and WGS contracts

- Summary**
- The best guarantee of receiving grant is to carry out and claim the work in the approved claim year and planting year
 - Decisions to accept rescheduling requests are ultimately at the FC's discretion, but we will meet reasonable requests wherever possible
 - Agreed payments that are rescheduled into future years have a direct impact on the funding that can then be made available for new applications
 - The sooner the request to change a payment year is made the greater the chance that the request can be accepted

Introduction Claim years were introduced to improve grant contract management, business planning and budgeting. In response to an unprecedented increase in grant demand the FC has taken steps to ensure demand is confined to the budget available

Regional prospectuses for the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) were published in July 2005. These show the proportion of money already committed to existing agreements, and the money available for new agreements

EWGS/WGS contract holders may need, for various reasons, to change the agreed work or the agreed Claim Year. If so, contract holders must agree the change in planting year (for new planting) and/or the Claim Year with us beforehand. Amendment requests to reschedule payments (if accepted) have a direct effect on the budget available for other applications in those future years

The FC will always try to meet reasonable demands to reschedule work but must still ensure a credible budget is available for new applications

Policy Aims

- To meet amendment requests to reschedule work where it is well justified
- To ensure sufficient budget is set aside to meet the needs of new applications
- To make the decision-making process transparent
- To ensure any rescheduling is consistent with the core targets that the FC has to meet

Principles

To achieve the aims, the following principles will be used to help determine which rescheduling requests will be accepted:

- Any decision to accept or reject a rescheduling request to change a Planting Year or Claim Year is entirely at the Forestry Commission's discretion. If a request is not accepted applicants will need to carry out the work as agreed, or submit a new application. If you choose to submit a new application, note there are likely to be different eligibility criteria and payment rates
- The FC will only reschedule agreed payments up to two Claim Years ahead e.g. payments originally agreed for Claim Year 2005/2006 cannot be rescheduled beyond claim year 2007/2008
- Requests to change an agreed Planting Year by one season must have a sound justification and there must be sufficient budget available in the requested Claim Year. Requests to change Planting Year by more than one season will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances
- The FC will not accept amendment requests to reschedule payments for work that no longer meets FC targets or where there is no budget available. For example, requests to reschedule WGS WIG 2 payments into Claim Year 2006/2007 will not be accepted as it is not currently an FC funding priority (there is no grant of equivalent purpose currently available under EWGS)
- The FC will normally accept requests to reschedule work and payments only during certain periods each year. This is to allow seasonal and financial considerations to be properly taken into account. Where possible, agreement holders will be contacted individually about the deadlines for requesting these changes but in any case, the deadlines will be published on the FC England website and distributed to forestry organisations such as the Forestry and Timber Association, the Forestry Contracting Association and Institute of Chartered Foresters
- To ensure rescheduling activity does not overly reduce the budget for new applications the FC will set limits on the total amount of rescheduling change that can be accommodated by any one Claim Year. The value of rescheduled payments allocated to any one Claim Year will not normally exceed 20% of the uncommitted funds available (as published in the regional prospectuses). This limit may be varied by region and type of grant to ensure that the full budget is allocated to applicants

- Requests to change agreements will be accepted on a first come first served basis until the request deadline passes or until the rescheduling budget limit has been reached, whichever comes first
- Where significant funds are involved, the FC may on occasion write to individual or groups of agreement holders where work has not yet been claimed. The applicant will be advised of the options available for that particular contract, including rescheduling where possible

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