

FC(S) GUIDANCE NOTE 26 ANCIENT WOODLAND SITES AND SFGS:

Purpose

This note sets out how the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme will be used in relation to future management of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), and defines the meaning of 'priority sites' in the context of Stewardship 3 grant. The Forestry Practice Guide 'Restoration of native woodlands on ancient woodland sites', published in April 2003, sets out options for managing these sites and should be used for more detailed practical guidance.

Background

The basic approach to for managing ancient woodlands is:

Native PAWS (dominated by site-native species): maintain as native woodland and improve or restore their biodiversity value, following Forestry Practice Guides (FPG) 1-8 as for ancient semi-natural woodlands.

Non-native PAWS (dominated by non-native species): maintain or restore biodiversity according to the potential for restoration to native woodlands as assessed using the FPG on restoration of native woodland. The minimum requirement in all cases will be to maintain the remaining ancient woodland biodiversity. We will encourage restoration according to the 'potential for restoration' detailed in FPG 1 – 8.

SFGS Grants

Stewardship 3 – Native Woodlands

The purpose of this grant is "to improve the ecological value of native woodlands, through work related to Native Woodland Habitat Action Plans". Although grants will normally be based on 60% of Standard Costs, 90% of Standard Costs will be paid for work in woodland SSSIs, Natura sites and agreed priority sites for restoring native woodlands on ancient woodland sites. In the main, priority sites comprise those with a high potential for restoration, although they may include some sites with a medium potential for restoration (see below).

For native PAWS sites outside SSSI and Natura sites the S3 grant will be available at 60%.

For non-native PAWS sites *use* the 'restoration potential' as assessed from the FPG (pages 18-23) for guidance on the approach and the grants available. Restoration potential is based on the ecological potential for successful native woodland restoration, modified in some cases by practical factors (such as access) where these are particularly important. Owners aims, economic factors such as future revenue, and public benefits including visual, cultural and archaeological (see p17 - 19 of the Practice Guide) will also need to be taken into account in deciding the most suitable option.

Restoration to native woodland can be either full or partial (see p 28-29 of the Guide). An alternative to restoring of native woodland in suitable cases is to continue to manage non-native stands whilst gradually maintaining or enhancing their biodiversity (for example on a continuous cover basis).

Whether full or partial restoration is chosen, the speed at which restoration occurs may be more or less gradual according to the situation (see section 5 of the Guide)

- *Sites with a high potential for restoration to native woodland*

There will be an expectation to restore such sites to native species. There may be some exceptions to full restoration: for example where there are significant visual, cultural or biodiversity aspects which justify partial restoration. In some cases there will be a case for maintaining non-native conifers on biodiversity grounds (eg for red squirrel conservation). For restoration we will pay 90% of Standard Costs.

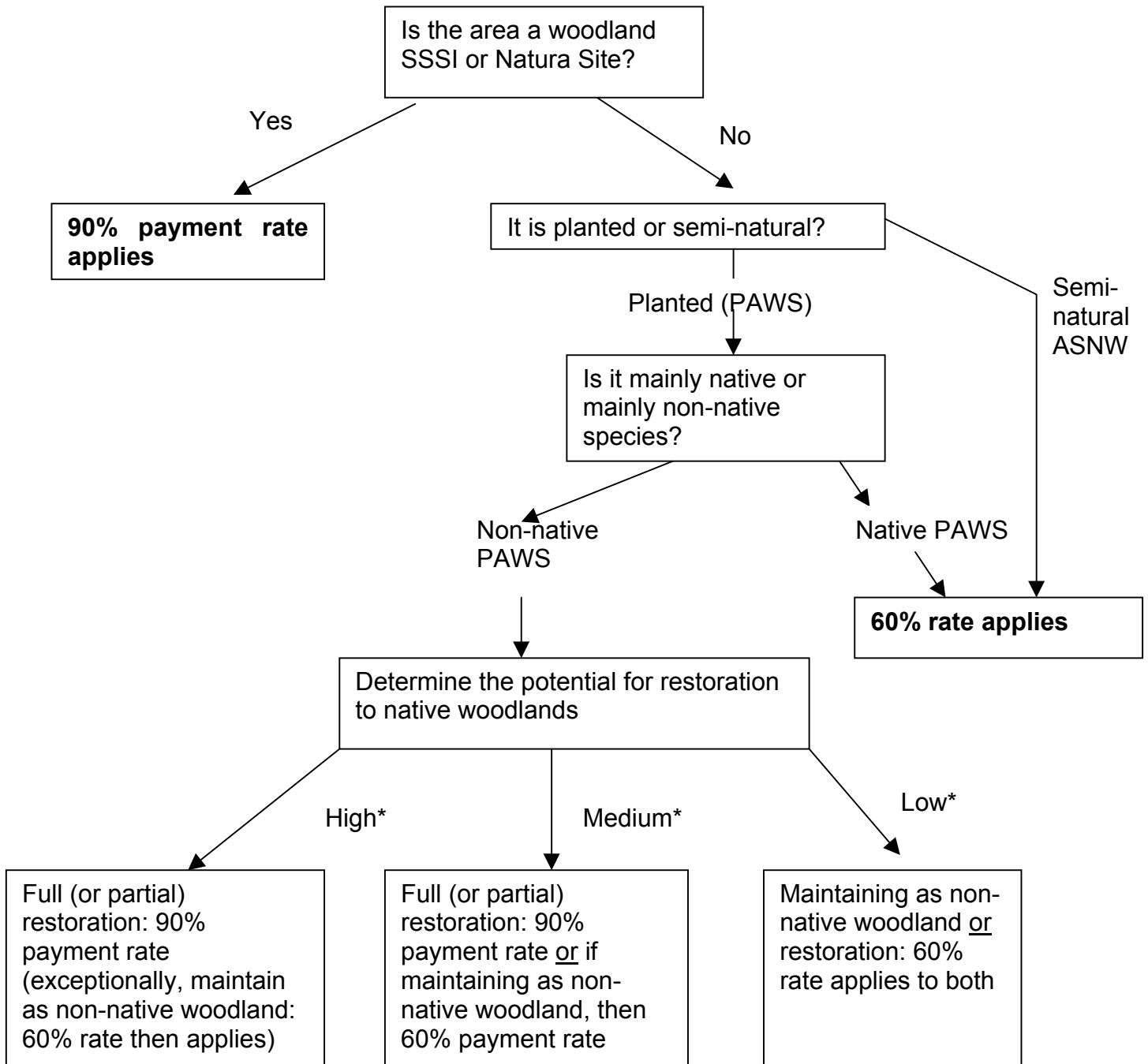
- *Sites with a medium potential for restoration to native woodland*

We will be influenced by the owner's objective in these cases. Full or partial restoration to native woodland will normally be encouraged, with exceptions for maintaining non-native forest as per *high potential* above. Where we agree that restoration is appropriate then 90% of Standard Costs will be paid. If the site is part of a strategic Forest Habitat Network this will strengthen the justification for 90% payment. The use of Stewardship 6 (developing alternative systems to clear felling) may be more appropriate where a more gradual restoration to native woodland is envisaged.

- *Sites with a low potential for restoration to native woodland*

The normal options for these sites will be either to maintain as mainly non-native species (as above) or to partially restore. If owners are keen, and *either* the site is indicated for restoration in an agreed Strategic FHN *or* there would be no significant visual, cultural or biodiversity penalties from restoration, we may be prepared to support full restoration. Stewardship 3 (or S6 if more suitable) can be paid at 60% of Standard Costs for restoration.

**S3 Ancient Woodland Sites and SFGS Stewardship Grant
Flowchart for determining % payment rate for Standard costs**



**As determined by the methodology set out in FC Practice Guide 'Restoration of Native Woodland on Ancient Woodland sites'.*