

Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme Challenge Fund for the Management of Woodlands In and Around Towns



Introduction

This leaflet explains how to apply for Forestry Commission Scotland Challenge Funding towards the costs of managing existing woodlands in and around towns and cities throughout Scotland. It will run from June 2004 to March 2008, and a total of £3.5m will be available as a 'top up' to the standard rates of grant payable under Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS), as follows:

Year 2004 – 2005	£0.5m	Total Funding £3.5m
Year 2005 – 2006	£1.0m	
Year 2006 – 2007	£1.0m	
Year 2007 – 2008	£1.0m	



What are Woodlands In and Around Towns?

About three-quarters of the Scottish population lives in towns and cities. The Scottish Forestry Strategy recognises that the presence of trees and woods can do much to improve the urban environment and the countryside around towns and cities, making a valuable contribution to 'greenspace' networks. Woodlands help transform the urban landscape and improve the quality of life of people living nearby. They bring the countryside right into the heart of our towns and cities, making it accessible from the 'doorstep'. Woodlands also help to make neighbourhoods attractive places where people want to be.

Today, more and more people are living and working in urban areas. Woodlands have a vital role to play in improving the local urban environment and enhancing the quality of life of those living nearby. Woods in and around towns are often described as the 'green lungs' of our towns and cities. They contribute to improving people's physical and mental health by providing places for informal recreation; they provide 'breathing spaces' away from the stresses of modern life; and they also provide opportunities for community activity and support.

Some urban woodlands require little work to enhance their benefits. However, others have suffered from years of neglect and are in urgent need of active management. This Challenge Fund is available to provide support for a wide variety of woodlands in and around towns, to enable improvements to be made and public benefits obtained.

Aims of this Challenge Fund

This Challenge Fund aims to enable woodland owners in Scotland to contribute to the regeneration of the urban environment, and to improve the quality of life for people living and working in urban areas, by bringing urban woodlands into sustainable management, including:

- Identifying and overcoming threats to woodland management;
- Providing new and improved opportunities for access, recreation and health benefits (eg health improvement projects and 'paths for health');
- Protecting and improving biodiversity in urban woodlands;
- Encouraging and facilitating community participation in the improvement and management of urban woodlands;
- Improving the productivity of urban woodlands;
- Improving landscape and contributing to local distinctiveness by enhancing the setting of existing settlements and creating a matrix of attractive landscapes to accommodate new development; and

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Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme

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- Encouraging people to learn about woodlands and their sustainable management.

This fund is also intended to recognise the higher costs of managing small woodlands in urban areas.

What is a Challenge Fund?

An SFGS Challenge Fund offers money **in addition** to the standard stewardship grants available under the SFGS. The additional money is available for work that contributes towards the aims of the Challenge and reflects the additional costs associated with the management of urban woodlands for public benefits.

Challenge Funds are so-called because they are competitive: applicants are required to bid for the additional money they need to carry out work that meets the aims of the Challenge.

Every application is judged in terms of its value for money in relation to the aims of the Challenge Fund. A judging panel awards grants to those schemes that best meet the aims of the Challenge, which offer the best value for money and maximise public benefits. The judging panel comprises independent experts and Forestry Commission Scotland staff. Schemes that are either ineligible or that are unsuccessful may still qualify for normal SFGS payments.

Eligibility criteria

The Challenge Fund applications must meet the following criteria:

- At least half the woodland must lie within 1km of a settlement of at least 2000 people (see Map 1);
- The woodland must cover a minimum of 1.0 hectare;
- The area must comprise at least 40% woodland cover. Paths linking areas of woodland through open green space may be eligible for grant aid as long as an overall plan sets out the network to be developed and the benefits to be achieved;
- They must provide evidence of stakeholder involvement or details of planned stakeholder engagement;
- They must include opportunities for public access and recreation. Work to encourage woodland recreation (Stewardship Grant 7) is essential. Wherever possible, access proposals should be integrated with wider access work in the area e.g. access strategies, open space strategies, core path plans, path networks, health walk networks and interpretation strategies; and
- They must include either a long-term management plan or they demonstrate how the work proposals fit into the longer-term management plan for the woodland area.

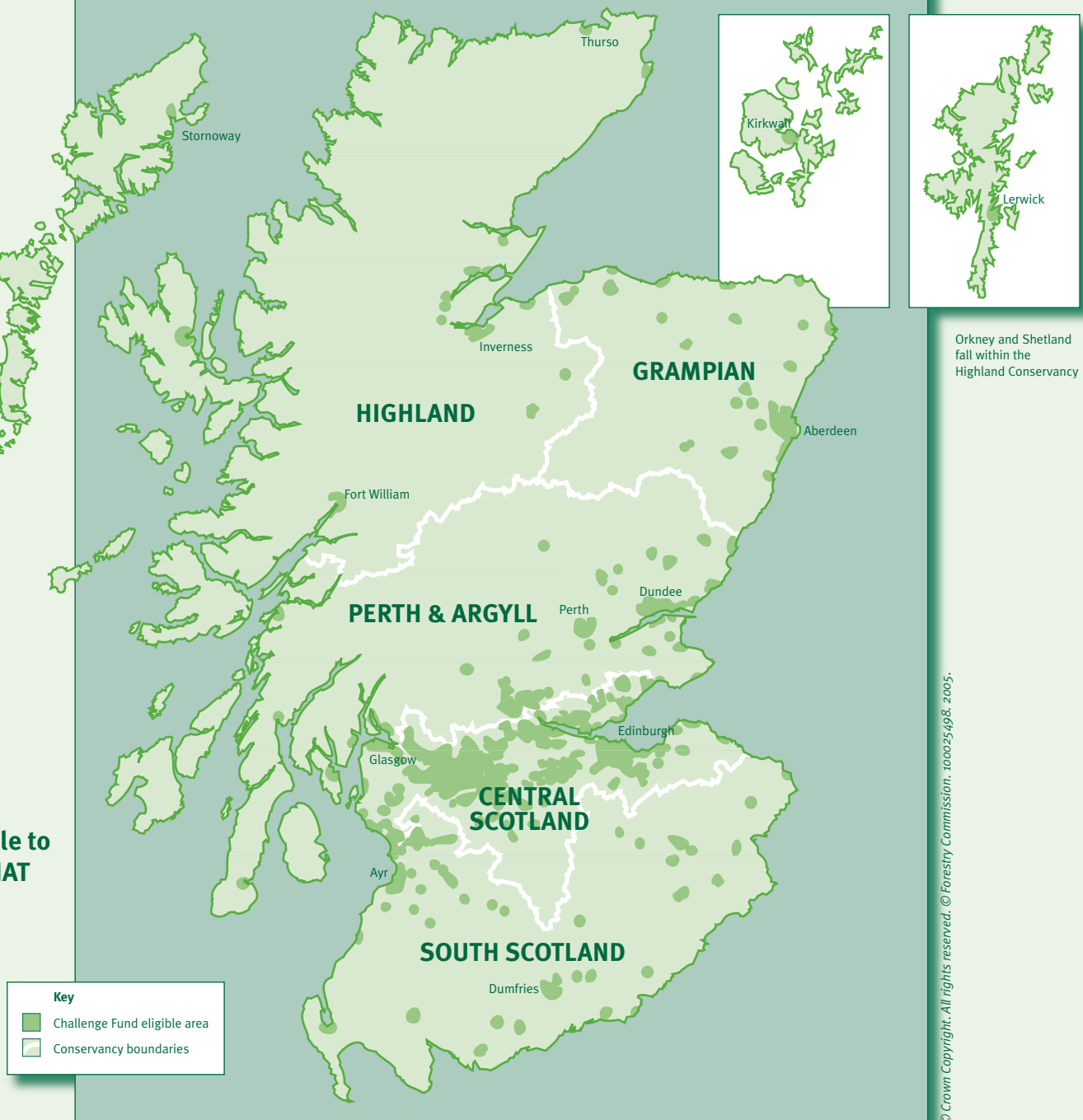
Eligible operations

The Challenge Fund is available across the following Stewardship Grants:

- S1 Improving timber quality
- S3 Native woodlands
- S4 Improving woodland biodiversity
- S5 Landscape improvement
- S6 Developing alternatives to clear-felling
- S7 Woodland recreation



**Map 1:
Areas eligible to
apply for WIAT
Challenge
Funding**



A full list of SFGS standard operations is provided within the ‘Standard Costs’ of the SFGS Applicants Booklet and some examples of operations that can be funded are:

- Relevant surveys to assist with management planning;
- Preparation of a woodland management plan and recreational management plan;
- Development of a feasibility assessment and assistance with the development of community participation;
- Providing or upgrading appropriate routes, stiles, gates, benches and bridges for recreation and small scale car parking facilities;
- Developing all ability access;
- Undertaking vegetation management to paths, rides and other relevant open areas;
- Providing appropriate signs and leaflets;
- Carrying out safety inspections, removal of fly tipping, litter collections and assessing visitor numbers;
- Developing access for woodland management;
- Undertaking necessary silvicultural work, including tree safety work, net costs of small scale thinning or felling to improve views and internal design;
- Respacing of conifer and broadleaved regeneration;

- Preparation of woodland management plans and carrying out associated baseline surveys and monitoring; and
- Protection from grazing.

Other operations not listed in the ‘SFGS Applicants Booklet’ may also be included as part of the Challenge Fund application as long as these are relevant to the aims of the Challenge Fund. These must be clearly identified in your application.

Other SFGS work may be included within the application, for example proposals to replant areas of woodland or to plant new areas of woodland. However these would not be eligible to receive additional funding through the Challenge Fund.

The production of a woodland management plan is often an important precursor to direct action on the ground. Applications for the production of such plans, in advance of more detailed proposals for woodland management, can be considered for the funding. Applicants might, for example, consider a two-stage process in the development of their proposals; stage one requiring survey and management plan production, the second stage covering the completion of works identified during stage one.

A single management plan may be used to support applications for a suite of SFGS elements. A plan that includes all the woodlands within the same ownership, including their ongoing management for the next five years – is strongly encouraged.

Standards and Guidelines

Your application must meet the eligibility requirements for SFGS as well as the standards laid down in the Forestry Commission’s environmental guidelines, referred to in the UK Forestry Standard. Your application will also be subject to our normal consultation procedures that apply to SFGS applications.

When can I apply?

Two judging rounds will be held each year. There will be a four month processing window, including the judging period. A timetable with key dates is shown below. Work can be phased to run over several years of the Challenge Fund period as long you make this clear in your application form and tell us how much you wish to bid for within each year. If accepted, this would be shown in the contract.

Applications must arrive at the relevant Conservancy Office (see back page for addresses) by the closing date for receipt of applications.

Key milestones for 2005/07	Final Dates
Closing date for receipt of SFGS applications at Conservancy office	31 January and 31 July each year, 05, 06 and 07
FCS informing applicants of the results	30 November 31 May each year, 05, 06 and 07

Getting help

Forestry Commission Scotland staff will be happy to discuss your proposals with you, before you submit your application. To help prevent you investing time in applications that are unlikely to be successful, we would strongly encourage you to discuss your initial proposals with FCS staff, local authorities and other organisations like SNH. This may also highlight other funding packages that might be available. Getting your application to us in good time means that we will have more time to help you. Additional information is available on the Forestry Commission Scotland website, <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland>, including guidance notes and blank copies of the scoring sheets used by FCS staff to score your application.

Completing the application forms

You should complete SFGS application forms SFGS/FP 1, 3a and 3b. It is recommended that you use the SFGS grant calculator, which contains the suite of electronic forms, and send it electronically to the Conservancy office. Operations should be detailed on SFGS/FP 3b. Details of how to complete the WIAT element of the Grant Calculator can be found in the Guidance Note for the Grant Calculator. Incomplete applications will be returned and will not be eligible for the Challenge Fund. The operations included on the Grant Calculator must be shown on accompanying maps.

Where you are applying for funds to carry out non – standard operations or structures, you should include drawn specifications as an appendix to the application. If you are applying for funds to create new posts, these should be supported by a job description.

Where funding from other sources exist, this should be declared in the application text. Any WIAT top – up funding applied for should account for this and be equal only to the net amount you require from Forestry Commission Scotland to undertake the work.

If applications include large work programmes of a specific type, (eg thinning) we encourage applicants to carry out tenders to demonstrate best value for money. If this demonstrates that Direct Local Authority staff can deliver the same work for the least cost, these operations can be included in the application.

When we receive your application, we will process it in the normal way including, if necessary, the four weeks on the Public Register of New Planting and Felling.

Once the consultation period is complete we will agree with you any changes that may be required to the application and issue you with the final version of the grant calculator and the SFGS contract text. You will then be required to submit a four-page report summarising the application and how you consider the application meets the judging criteria. This summary should include a table setting out the overall funding package and how the funds from the SFGS/WIAT Challenge Fund fit into the overall total. This table will be used to gauge value for money and the ‘gearing’ provided by other funders. The application, final version of the Grant Calculator and the summary report will then be submitted to the judging panel.

What if I have a current (WGS)* or SFGS contract?

The Challenge Fund aims to add public benefit to the management of existing woodlands usually over 10 years old. Work already funded under a current grant scheme will not be eligible.

**(The WGS is no longer open to new applications in Scotland)*

How will your application be judged?

Applications must meet the aims of the Challenge fund and the other eligibility criteria set out in this leaflet. The judging panel awards grants to those schemes that best meets the aims of the Challenge, which offer the best value for money and maximise public benefits. The scoring sheet used by the judges can be found on the Forestry Commission website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland>.

When will you know the result of your application?

The judging panel will assess all of the applications using the information provided against their expert knowledge and experience.

We will aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 working days of the judging panel.

Starting the work

Do not start any work until you have received a Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme contract signed by us and written confirmation that your bid has been successful.

Claiming the grant

For each year you have been approved challenge funding, you must complete all the work and submit your claim by 28 February. This is so we can pay you before 31 March.

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How will we make the payment?

We will pay the Stewardship grant, together with the 'top-up' money from the Challenge fund when you have completed the work. Other SFGS grants will be paid at the times and upon the conditions agreed in the contract.

Who should I ask to find out more?

Contact the Woodland Officer dealing with your area, as follows:

Forestry Commission Scotland

Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh EH12 7AT
Tel: 0131 314 6156
Fax: 0131 314 6152
Email: fcscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.forestry.gov.uk
Director Scotland: Bob McIntosh
Head of Grants and Licences: James Ogilvie

Conservancies

Highland Conservancy

'Woodlands', Fodderty Way
Dingwall IV15 9XB
Tel: 01349 862144
Fax: 01349 866624
Email: highland.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Conservator: Bob Dunsmore

Grampian Conservancy

Ordiquhill, Portsoy Road
Huntly AB54 4SJ
Tel: 01466 794542
Fax: 01466 794986
Email: grampian.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Conservator: John Risby

Central Scotland Conservancy

1 North Avenue, Clydebank Business Park
Clydebank G81 2DR
Tel: 0141 941 2611
Fax: 0141 941 2125
Email: centralscotland.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Conservator: Keith Wishart

From June 2005:

*Bothwell House, Hamilton Business Park,
Caird Park, Hamilton ML3 0QA
Tel & Fax: TBA*

Perth & Argyll Conservancy

Algo Business Centre, Glenearn Road
Perth PH2 0NJ
Tel: 01738 442830
Fax: 01738 441787
Email: panda.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Conservator: Syd House

South Scotland Conservancy

11 Church Crescent, Dumfries DG1 1DF
Tel: 01387 256111
Fax: 01387 257888
Email: southscotland.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Conservator: John Dougan

From May 2005:

*55/57 Moffat Road, Dumfries DG1 1NP
Tel: 01387 272440
Fax: 01387 251491*

South Scotland Conservancy Area Office

North Wheatlands Mill
Wheatlands Road
Galashiels TD1 2HQ
Tel: 01896 750222
Fax: 01896 751286

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