

Email Alert 27th February 2009



English Woodland Grant Scheme

EWGS Forthcoming Changes – higher rates, higher percentage contributions, eased eligibility criteria

2009/2010 application window extended

We have extended the application window for Woodland Improvement and Woodland Assessment grants for 2009/2010 payment until further notice. We will continue to accept applications until fully committed and then start offering 2010/2011 payment

New Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG) available from 1st March 2009

New, regionally targeted WIGs offering 80% contribution to costs will start to be introduced from 1st March 2009. Further details will be available shortly from regional offices, but include:

- SSSI 80% widened to any work that helps SSSIs achieve and maintain favourable status
- work that benefits woodland birds and butterflies in priority areas
- work to remove rhododendron in native woodland in Cornwall
- new priority areas for ancient woodland
- public access provision in new priority access areas

Higher Standard Cost Rates for WIG

The standard costs have been reviewed, with an average 20% increase to reflect cost trends. These will be introduced from the 1st March along with an excel 'WIG cost calculator' in place of form EWGS 5

Higher payment rates for Woodland Planning Grant (WPG)

From the 1st March, new WPG applications will be paid in 2010/2011 at the following rates:

- £20/ha for the first 100 Hectares of woodland on the property
- £10/ha thereafter
- £1000 minimum payment

Forest Plans that are expiring are now eligible for WPG and we are developing a process so we can approve thinning, felling and restocking proposals as part of the WPG process. This will help woodland owners comply with imminent new public body timber procurement policies – further details will be issued in the coming months.

Woodland Management Grant – certification threshold raised

From the 1st March we are open for WMG applications with first payment in Autumn 2010. The threshold for certification requirement will be lifted to 100Ha; woodlands between 30 and 100 hectares will no longer require certification to be eligible, but will need to have an approved management plan.

From now on, all WMG contracts will be offered with a 5 calendar year contract period i.e. 1st January to 31st December. Contracts must be approved by the 15th May in order to receive Autumn payment, otherwise we have to defer payment for a year. Therefore from 1st March we will be processing applications where the work should start from 1st January 2010, the contract must be signed approved by 15th May latest and first WMG payment will be made in Autumn 2010.

Any unapproved WMG contracts with first payment in Autumn 2009 must be signed and returned by the 15th May 2009, otherwise it will have to be deferred for a year.

Woodland Creation Grant - £2000 additional contributions

When WCG opens 1st May 2009, we will be offering new additional contributions of up to £2000.

We expect to be able to offer 2009/2010 or 2010/2011 payment for WCG applications this year, depending on applicant preferences.

Due to recent changes in EU rules, landowners will remain eligible to claim SPS on land where woodland is planted from 2008. As Farm Woodland Payment (FWP) takes account of SPS income forgone, we will have to reduce the rate of FWP, but we aim to make the reduction less than the expected SPS payment – therefore the overall annual payment should remain the same or higher than the existing FWP rates.

Further details on the WCG 2009 arrangements will be included in another email alert during April.

Woodland Regeneration Grant

We will open 1st May for WRG applications with 2010/2011 first payment. There are no plans for rate changes, but this year we will be seeking co-finance approval under RDPE for this grant. This will mean an increase in WRG funding and greater flexibility to adjust budgets between grants where appropriate

We are in the process of updating all of the EWGS literature and webpages to reflect the above changes and aim to have up to date information for applicants in early March

And finally...Get your claims in by 31st March!

Remember that you must complete your work and submit a claim form for 2008/2009 approved work by the 31st March at the latest in order to ensure payment. If you don't submit a claim by then, your right to grant is lost and payment would be at the FC's absolute discretion.

If you have approved 2008/2009 work, know it won't be carried out by the end of March but still wish to do it, you must submit an amendment to your local FC office by the 31st March. We hope to be able to accommodate all reasonable requests subject to the FC England grant management policy (Operations Note 7, available in the [EWGS document library](#)).

If you expect to complete part of the work by the end of March, contact your local FC office on how best to handle your claim/amendment.