

Briefing Paper: Interim changes to Woodland Regeneration Grant for 2011

1 Introduction

We have developed revised rules and rates for WRG to address various current issues and to take opportunities to assist woodland owners. They will be implemented for 2011 on an interim basis for the next planting season. They will be reviewed again following the report of the Bishop of Liverpool's [Independent Panel on Forestry](#).

The revised WRG rules / rates are intended to reflect a reasonable balance, meeting the following aims:

- To ensure WRG reflects the recently published Ancient & Native Woodland Practice Guide
- Simplifying the WRG payment rates structure
- To enable us to more simply and effectively introduce restocking supplements for *Phytophthora ramorum* infected sites, which have been approved by the Minister.
- The commitment in the Coalition's Programme for Government "to halt the loss of habitats and restore biodiversity" and similar commitments to international biodiversity targets, whilst also helping to sustain a competitive, thriving and resilient forestry sector.

The new rates will be effective from 16th May 2011 for all new applications. Applications in progress where draft contracts have not been issued as of 16th May 2011 will be adjusted to the new rates/rules; regional FC staff will be in contact with applicants who are affected.

2 2011 Payment Rates

There will be 4 basic rates for WRG, based on the whether the site is ancient or not, and whether the restock species is native or not. Aside from minor changes due to simplification / rounding, they largely match the existing rates.

Restock species	Ancient woodland site	Non-ancient woodland site	Supplement for <i>Phytophthora</i> infected sites
Native	1750	1000	1500
Non-native	0	500	

3 Funding availability

We will accept applications for restocking for financial years 2012/13 and/or 2013/14, hence support is offered for 3 restocking seasons. Sites served a Statutory Plant Health Notice by 31st March 2011 due to infection by *Phytophthora ramorum* may have a claim year of 2011/12. Offer of contracts is subject to overall demand and funding availability.

4 Work standards

Ancient woodland sites

Where ancient woodland sites or native stands are being restocked, management will have to comply with the Ancient & Native Woodland Practice Guide.

Species

Natives are defined as per the Ancient & Native Woodland Practice Guide, which means:

- Up to 20% non-natives are allowed, providing they are not invasive
- A 'small proportion' of the remaining 80% could be 'advancing native species' (e.g. beech) or 'honorary natives' (e.g. sycamore), particularly if they are already present on the site. At this stage definitive rules (e.g. geographic spread of naturalised species) have not been set but will be reviewed and introduced if required.

Highly productive broadleaves planted as a commercial crop at wide spacing (e.g. poplar and cricket bat willows) are, for the sake of grant aid, considered as 'non natives' and would be paid pro-rata provided there is a minimum stocking of 100 trees per hectare.

Conifer nurses may be used as per the new practice guide, but the key principle remains that existing features and values cannot be damaged.

Restocking should be with mixed species (minimum 2, normally at least 3) to increase resilience/adaptability to climate change, pests and diseases. A mixed species at landscape scale is essential to increase and maintain resilience. Species should be suited to the site conditions so they are productive as well as meeting other objectives.

Open space

Normally open space is limited to 20% or below when restocking, but increased flexibility up to 40% may be allowed for clearly identified purposes. Proposals should be clearly differentiate between temporary and permanent open space (the latter means areas that will be actively managed to ensure it remains open). Productive potential is an important consideration when determining the appropriate amount of open space.

Stocking density and spacing

Stocking and planting spacing should be matched to the objectives and desired outcomes; examples are given in the AW Practice Guide, including:

- At least 2500 / ha for production of high quality hardwood timber
- 1000 – 2500 / ha where timber is desirable but quality is not so important
- 500 – 1000 / ha where the aim is simply to establish native tree canopy
- 20 – 100 / ha for restocking standards over coppice or trees in wood pasture

Where stocking densities lower than 500 / ha are agreed, the restocking grant will be paid pro rata based on a proportion of 1000 e.g. Proposals for planting 800 trees per hectare will receive 80% of WRG. Standards in coppice systems will be supported through WIG.

Mixtures

If over 80% native species are planted, it will be paid at full native rate (£1750 or £1000). Below 80% we will pay grant according to the percentage planted e.g. if the site is being restocked with 70% native, we will pay 70% of the restock area at the native rate, and 30% at the non-native rate.

On ancient woodland sites, if the native proportion of the restocking species falls below 60%, we will not pay any grant.

Phytophthora ramorum sites

Restocking on Phytophthora ramorum sites will be subject to supplementary which is set out in Operations Note 24.