

## **Applicants Focus Group Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

*Various points and questions for discussion*

### **Land Information Service (LIS)**

*EWGS*

Currently not able to view whether an EWGS scheme applies to land holdings since launched in 2006. WGS as far as Mk III and felling licences are only what's available at present

Q: Can this be updated to show EWGS and refreshed so boundaries to all current regional key priority grants are visible and historic / irrelevant priorities e.g. Quality of Place are removed?

*WCG*

No ability as yet to determine whether ACs such as 'Priority of Places'; 'Nature Improvement Areas'; 'Woodland for Water' are applicable to prospective application sites

Q: Can this be made available?

Apart from the EWGS scheme boundaries, this is all done, with a caveat that further adjustments are needed to the symbology for Priority Places for England on the External LIS map. Currently it's too pale to be seen on the map and the legend swatch does not match to the map symbology. A fix for this and the update to EWGS scheme boundaries is likely to be in the first quarter of 2013.

### **FC Web Site**

Access to new hub / or 'Area' pages not easily possible from current format unless specifically use 'search' function.

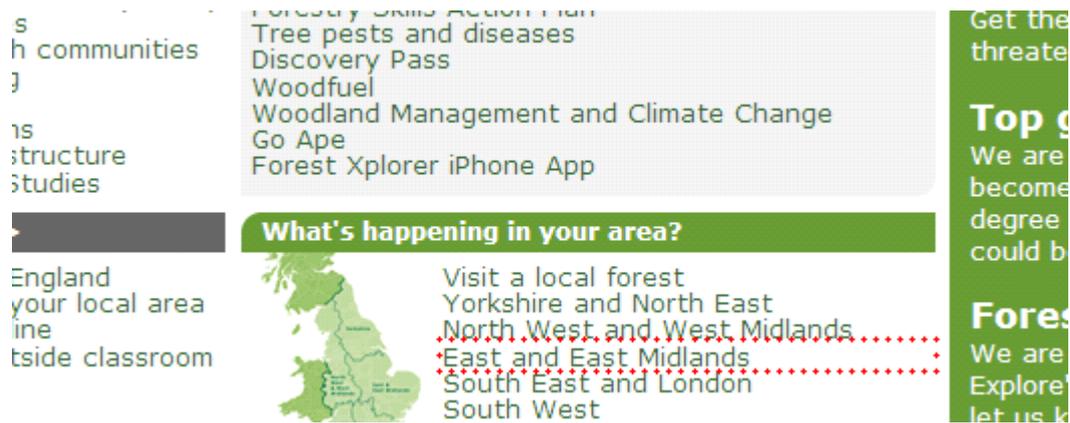
A quick link from the page that lists the current suite of grants might be a useful location to add this?

The screen shot below is of the England page and this has links to the Areas, it is likely that Areas will be the key focus for the web pages with the hubs information being present on the relevant pages to ensure clarity in who to contact. The website structure is currently being reviewed and we will make sure that this issue is raised.

However... it is possible to get to all of the old 'Regional' pages from the England front page.

On the Grants and Regulations home page, bottom right there is a section called Consultation and the Public Register, this has a sentence saying 'Contact us for Grants and Regulations advice of any kind. Clicking on Contact us then Area offices on the Contact Us page takes you to the Area page. This is obviously not ideal, so we will look to put this right, in line with your query.

We will try to add a right hand link to the Area page on the Grants and Regulations Page if you consider that this would be helpful?



Once in specific hub 'Area' it would be useful if FC were able to continue publishing funds remaining against the budget for each type of grant; updated either monthly or quarterly?

Grant spend is now managed nationally with indicative predicted spend amounts suggested for each Area. If one Area is successful in distributing more than predicted, this amount is made available. FC communicates availability of grant budget locally through the Area contacts, in order not to deter customers if the website were to give the message that any Area was close to distributing its predicted spend.

Ben Walker has now completed his action by making an amendment to the following document:

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/GrantPayments&Avail.pdf/\\$file/GrantPayments&Avail.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/GrantPayments&Avail.pdf/$file/GrantPayments&Avail.pdf)

This is on each individual grant page on the website on the right hand links called Grant payment and availability – but it doesn't give amounts.

## On-line Forms

### Web-Forms

- On-line agent authority form needs landowner/occupier signature

Q: How can this be achieved using the online web-form?

The form is designed so that it can be part completed by an agent before being completed by the landowner / occupier. Once saved, the agent will be provided with a link that they send to the landowner for them to be able to open the document. The landowner / occupier opens the form, checks that all the details and permissions are correct before entering an electronic signature, then saves and submits to the FC.

- The table in the felling application form needs updating to display cubic metres in the end column not square metres

This was rectified some time ago and now reads correctly.

The point at which you can upload a map is within the restocking section and can be confusing if the application only includes thinning.

Q: Could requests for application map uploads be made at either the start of the application or at the very end?

Web made some changes to this form some time ago and it now reads:

**We normally expect the area felled to be restocked unless you are only thinning.** This section also has a mandatory validation so if you are doing anything other than thinning you have to fill in this section. The map validation has been added to the end. We did consider moving the mapping element away from the restocking but this would have added a further page to the form and we wanted to keep as short as possible. If the amended version is thought to be confusing we can look to add a further separate heading below the 'restocking' section entitled 'Maps'

Application for a Licence to Fell Growing Trees - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by BSD Ver 6 (Release 1).

http://forestrycommission.firmstep.com/default.aspx/RenderForm?ID=cJKqw1W3xdv&HideToolBar=0

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Application for a Licence to Fell Growing Trees

Forestry Commission Welcome, Harry Birch HOME BROWSE STYLING LOG OUT

Design Fill In Publish View Data Active: Application for a Licence to Fell Growing Trees (Version 12) Extranet

Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5

### Proposed Restocking

**We normally expect the area felled to be restocked unless you are only thinning.** Under the Forestry Act 1967 as amended, we usually attach conditions to the licence to secure restocking. We will discuss these conditions with you and will require your formal agreement to the conditions before the licence is issued. Tell us your proposals for restocking each area where felling is to take place.

Proposal for restocking

Map of felling area (signed and dated) Browse...

If you have not attached a map with this webform you must submit two signed and dated maps to your local area office

Yes I confirm my submission of maps by post  
 No I've uploaded my maps

Previous Review Save Next Cancel

Done

Start Microsoft... Inbox - ... 1 Reminder Abbrevia... wes7ir35... Applicat... RE: AFG ... Notes wit... 14:13

## GLOS

A link to the GLOS function is not easy to find on the FC website – using a search engine seems to be the easiest route at present.

Q: Can this be addressed and possibly located close to the link into the new web-forms?

We could link from a few places:

- EWGS homepage right hand link or
- From each grant page in the how to apply section or
- Webforms page – we can amend this page to add the G&L Online Service link.

Which is the preferred option?

increase the capacity for sustainable management.

### Eligibility and how to apply

You can apply online using our [webforms](#) service or by printing and completing the application form below.

For further information about eligibility, grant rates and how to apply, please refer to [EWGS6 WMG Guide](#)  and [EWGS1 General Guide](#) .

### Application forms and guidance

The roll-out of this functionality was initially limited to the e-pilot process but we are now currently undertaking training for agents who are interested in applying online for grants. This will hopefully increase demand for this application option, and it will therefore be a priority to make access easier by using one of the above options. This will be considered over the coming weeks.

Q: What is the long term view on GLOS bearing in mind HLS and EWGS are set to merge?

Depending on what happens with the merger it is possible that GLOS will become a legacy system (similar to WGS), which will manage remaining payments to their natural conclusion. The FOP will consider this. This may be covered in more detail during the meeting

## WCG

We have had a scenario where new planting proposals expand a predominantly native woodland to 5 ha.

According to the wording in the new guidance, the AC (£2,000) becomes applicable at 5 ha or greater. This was requested at the point of application, but turned down by the WO as their interpretation was that expansion had to exceed 5 ha i.e. 5.01 to qualify for the AC.

Clarification required and guidance altered if this is the case.....

Guidance is correct and the scheme in question should have been accepted by the WO. We will ensure that field managers are made aware of this issue and to ensure that their woodland officers follow the guidance.

Q: What is the long term view on GLOS bearing in mind HLS and EWGS are set to merge? Andrew will cover this at the AFG meeting on 15 November 2012.

### **Charter Standard**

Approval of WPG MPs, FLs and EWGS applications particularly WIG can take many months and even years and can / is incredibly frustrating for landowners. Most landowners like to know timescales for approving such documents and at the moment there is nothing available for agents to use / advise with.

The Charter times for applications for grants, 'the clock' doesn't start until Woodland Officers have received all the relevant information and are satisfied that the proposal will fit with UKFS. The quality of initial applications does vary and this pre-application process to refine proposals can sometimes take time. However once a grant application is complete and ready to be processed, the Charter turnaround time is 11 weeks and FC England's latest annual report shows us meeting this for 83% of grants and licensing transactions. Charter times are monitored at area level on a regular basis.

To maintain good customer relations, a similar document to that available for felling licences - 'Charter Standard for Felling Licences' would be helpful for EWGS applications and related docs e.g. MPs.

Several of our existing documents do need updating and we are aware that there are gaps. We are currently amending some (Tree Felling – Getting Permission and also the EIA guidance). We will consider whether we can issue some interim guidance in relation to Citizen Charter times for EWGS but this is not a priority at the moment and may have to wait until any agreement on the integrated grant scheme is reached.

### **New RPDE programme**

Q: What are the plans with regards to the transitional period between the existing and new RDPE? Will EWGS close for a time or will some grants remain available, if so which ones?

Q: What is the situation with regards to future funding, can we expect similar levels and is there any indication yet as to whether priorities will remain the same or will they change?

The overall budget for the EC for 2014-20 has not yet been agreed neither has that for the CAP at the EU level never mind how that may be divided between Member States. It is hoped that budgets will be clarified by the middle of 2013. The overall priorities for the next programme have yet to be determined whilst those for forestry will reflect the Government response to the report of the IPF.

Questions posed by John Lockhart.