

Grants and Regulations National Email Alert

7 August 2014

Woodland Improvement Grant non fundable items—changes arising from the new Rural Development Programme

Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) supports capital investment work based on a list of standard costs for a range of operations and tasks.

From 1 January 2016 woodland grant payments will be made from the new rural development programme budget and from this date these payments will need to be for standard cost items that meet the rules of the new programme. In some of our current EWGS agreements there are standard cost items that do not meet the new rules. These items will need to be undertaken and claimed by 30 September 2015.

What you need to do

You do not need to do anything at the moment. Individual contracts are being checked and we will be in touch shortly with those customers that will be affected.

Further Information

The potential changes are described in detail below, should you require any further information on this issue please refer to [Operations Note 29](#). **Due to the number of agreements in scope, our administrative hubs will not be able to advise on or make pre-emptive amendments for individual cases.**

Background

The standard cost items that do not meet the new rules are those based on a time element. This is because time based items are deemed difficult to verify from a compliance perspective.

Items not eligible for payment after 30 September 2015 are listed in Table 1:

Table 1 New Programme – Non-Fundable Standard Cost Items

Standard Cost Code	Activity	Units
A18	Safety inspection	hourly rate
L1	Forest Craftsperson	per day
L2	Forestry Agent	per hour
L3	Tree surgery, 2 + chipper	per day
L4	Tractor & chipper/flail with 1 man	per day
L5	JCB hire & mini excavator	hour
L6	360 excavator	hour

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This has the potential to impact on existing WIG agreements with a 2015/16 claim year or beyond that contain these non-fundable items. However not all customers will be affected. An exercise is underway to check individual contracts and to pick out those which include "new programme – non-fundable" items. We will write to all those customers identified as having these items in their agreements in the autumn to advise on the options available. Broadly the options include;

- Bringing forward items in 2015/16 or re-schedule items in 2016/17 or beyond so that the work is undertaken and claimed by 30 September 2015;
- Considering a multi annual agreement under the New Environmental Land Management Scheme;
- Removing the ineligible items but continuing with the remaining items;
- Terminating the agreement – this will be viewed as the last resort.

We are currently putting in place the business processes that will allow us to deal with any necessary changes to affected contracts efficiently and effectively. Our aim is to cause minimum disruption to customers and we appreciate your patience and understanding whilst we work through this process.

General Grant Update

Key Dates

- EWGS closes for new applications on the 30 September 2014;
- Woodland Planning Grant and Plant Health support will remain available but contracts must be approved by the end of December 2014;
- Early 2015: An interim grant offer will be made available for priority grant types including Woodland Creation -more information will follow later in the year;
- The FC management plan template released in January 2014 must now be used in place of previous versions of the template.

Management of Larch Stands

New advice has recently been published on the [Forestry Commission website](#). It is strongly recommended that forest managers responsible for phytosanitary fellings who are not routinely employing stump treatment at present should give serious consideration to doing so in future. This is to minimise problems with the establishment of new conifer crops in the short term, and to ensure production unaffected by root and butt rot in the longer term.