

May 2009

## West Midlands: Forest School Challenge Fund

**Background** Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s. The aim was to encourage children to learn social, physical and educational skills while encouraging an appreciation and understanding of the environment. By the 1980s it had become an integral part of the Danish early years programme. Forest School was introduced to Great Britain by Bridgwater College in the 1990s and has rapidly grown in popularity especially with early years and primary schools.

**What is Forest School?** Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults, regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.

Forest School provides an excellent opportunity to bring learning to life, allowing children, young people and adults to explore and learn in a constructive way. This inspirational process increases self-confidence, self-esteem, improves individuals' ability to work co-operatively and counters a lack of motivation and negative attitude towards learning, while offering the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves.



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural  
Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

The English Woodland Grant Scheme is supported with  
European Union and Defra funding



## What happens at a Forest School?

- The first step is to train to become a qualified Level 3 Forest School leader - see training section for further details.
- Establish the needs of your learner group.
- Find an appropriate local woodland site or area in your own grounds, and gain the appropriate permission to use the site.
- A risk assessment is carried out by a qualified leader, to ensure the site is safe for the children and adults to visit.
- A typical programme involves the Forest School leader initially talking to the parents/carers and explaining all about Forest School and the sort of activities the participants will be doing. Parents of specific groups are invited to visit the Forest School site.
- The Forest School leaders get to know the participants and gain their confidence before taking them to the woodland, for example by leading activities at the children's educational setting for one or two sessions.
- The group (typically up to 15) visit the same local woodland site on a regular basis (once a week or fortnightly) ideally throughout the year, except in extreme conditions.
- Each session is learner-centred, based on the skills and needs of that group.
- Games are played and small achievable tasks are set, such as hide and seek, building shelters, learning how to use appropriate tools, lighting fires, cooking.
- The participants may learn basic woodland skills as a method to try and boost their self-confidence and raise their self-esteem.
- The participants learn to use natural materials and develop practical and intellectual skills, which can all be linked with the National Curriculum or the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland.

The Forest School model is suited to people of all ages and has been found to be particularly successful with children and young people who may struggle to achieve in the more formal classroom setting.

Participants are invited to woodland sites where they are supported in their learning, encouraged to explore the outdoor environment and appreciate nature. They use tools and learn boundaries of behaviour both physical and social. It has been found that the combination of freedom and responsibility is particularly beneficial to those with little confidence or challenging behaviour. Forest School allows participants to grow and discover their abilities without fear of criticism or failure.

Forest School provide a valuable teaching tool for a wide range of curriculum subjects, and is an excellent way to support and enrich the National Curriculum. Forest School can help develop and integrate a range of subjects from Biology and Sciences, Maths, Citizenship, Design and Technology, P.E, Art and English. A non-classroom environment gives children increased stimulation and encourages a greater learning potential.

The Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) Challenge Fund supports this initiative. The WIG offers schools, youth and environmental charities and other organisations the opportunity to apply for a grant, which will support setting up a Forest School site. The WIG will also offer support for the training of practitioners to investigate and lead their own Forest School.

**The WIG Fund** The Forestry Commission West Midlands Region has secured £180,000 to support the concept of Forest Schools in the West Midlands for three years. This WIG fund must be disbursed within financial years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

This funding will enable a series of Level 3 trained Forest Schools to be set up within the Region through single discretionary capital payments. Grants from this fund will be made to successful applicants on completion of the agreed work. The grant will be determined as a proportion of the costs of the agreed project.

**New grants for the final year**

We can now offer a **Capped Challenge grant** worth up to a maximum of £2,000 for each setting OR an **Open Challenge grant** worth up to a maximum of £10,000 for each setting.

**Work items eligible for Capped Grant**

**\*\* These items are considered 'compulsory' for a new Forest School site. The Forestry Commission can only offer grant aid to settings where Forest School is to be delivered by a qualified Forest School L3 Leader.**

**Your application may only choose from any of the work items below.**

**Eligible Work Items for Capped Grant**

List of Items Total £ (Must not exceed £2000)	Code	Grant Cap (£) maximum or less
Forest School L3 training**	C1	£700
Outdoor First Aid training**	C2	£100
Forest School tools and equipment	C3	£300
Wet Weather Gear for Children	C4	£300
Materials and supplies	C5	£200
Tree safety audit and remedial arboricultural work	C6	£600
Fencing (stock proof)	C7	£3.50 per metre
Kissing gate		£80

**Work items eligible for Open Challenge Grant**

Funding will be used to support the infrastructure for Forest Schools. The priority in Year 3 of this Challenge Fund will be given to the set-up cost involved with Forest Schools using Codes F1 to F6. Codes F7 to F11 are considered secondary items to which funding would be considered, but given a lower priority if funding applications exceed our budget restraints.

**Your application may only choose from any of the work items below.**

**Eligible Work Items for Open Challenge grant**

<b>Work Item – (please see Standard Costs List which is given below)</b>	<b>Code</b>
The cost of <b>Level 3</b> Forest School Leader training.	F1
The cost of Outdoor First Aid Course	F2
Initial Tree Safety Audits in the Forest School site	F4
Remedial arboricultural in the Forest School site	F5
Forest School kit bags, tools and ropes	F6

<b>Work Item</b>	<b>Code</b>
Wet weather gear for children	F7
Fencing and gates around the Forest School site	F8
Site storage facilities	F9
General materials and supplies	F10

**Where does the WIG apply?**

The fund is available in the West Midlands Government Office region, which encompasses the West Midlands metropolitan area, the counties of Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire, plus Herefordshire and other unitary authorities. Projects selected for funding will be spread throughout the region, nominally at least one per county.

**What proportion of costs can be paid?**

The aim is to offer support in a range of locations and situations, therefore it will be necessary to maintain flexibility in the proportion that the Forestry Commission contributes.

Applications will be judged against a set of public benefit criteria (see Annex 2). Once the application has been assessed we will write to you informing you of the level of grant you will receive. If you are successful in securing a grant we will invite you to confirm how you wish to proceed.

**Is there a time limit?**

The final year of the Forest School WIG will have a claim year of 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.

**Applications for the third year must be received by 31 October 2009, and work must be undertaken and claim submitted by 16th February 2011.**

Failure to complete the agreed work or make the claim before the deadline will mean that no right to the grant will exist. Any payments that may be made in these cases will be at the Forestry Commission's absolute discretion.

**How do I apply?** Applications must be made on form EWGS 1 and EWGS Forest School and submitted with an OS Master Map® showing the areas for which grant is sought. The EWGS General Guide explains about the maps and how to obtain them free of charge. In making an application, you should seek to answer all the items listed in Annex 2.

**When can I claim?** The grant should be claimed as a lump sum when you have completed all of the work agreed in the Contract. You must do all the work agreed and maintain the facilities to our reasonable satisfaction.

In this, the final year of the scheme, the work must be undertaken and your claim submitted by 16th February 2011.

**Further Information and Advice** For further information, please contact: Nick Smith or Wendy Edgerton

The Forestry Commission  
Ludlow Area Office  
West Midlands Conservancy  
Whitcliffe  
Ludlow  
Shropshire  
SY8 2HD

Tel: 01584 877544

Email: [fcwmidludlow@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fcwmidludlow@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

The information is also available from  
<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6rmqf5>

**Versions** Version 1.0 issued May 2009

**Training to become a Forest School Leader**

To be a Forest School Leader it is important to undertake the Level 3 qualification. However, there are also Level 1, 2 and 4 courses available:

- **Level 3** training is available to teachers, support assistants, youth workers nursery nurses, etc, with relevant appropriate experience.
- **Level 2** training is shorter, and designed for people with less previous experience of working with children and young people, or those who only want to work as Forest School assistants.
- **Level 1** training is available to people who want an introduction to Forest School.

Before you can lead Forest School, you need a first aid qualification. The First Aid qualification can be either First Aid at Work (4 days) or the Intermediate Temporary Care (ITC) Qualification First Aid in the Outdoors (2 days) and is valid for 3 years. Due to the outdoor nature of the work it is recommended that the ITC qualification is gained in addition to the First Aid at Work especially if Forest School sessions are to be led in remote locations.

**Level 3 Training Providers**

Most trainers offering Open College Network qualifications in Forest School now belong to the OCN Forest School Training Network. The Network was started in 2006 and recommends the following requirements for lead trainers delivering Level 3 courses:

Recognised Level 3 Forest School Qualification

Experience of setting up and running a range of Forest School programmes since qualification.

Recognised qualification in teaching and assessing Level 3/adults

Proven experience of L3 Forest School training or mentoring by an existing member of the OCN Training Network or L4 Training the Trainers Award (currently being developed)

Active membership of the OCN Training Network including attendance at annual moderation/standardisation meeting and willingness to share good practice.

**The Open College Network (OCN) runs four levels of qualifications. To become a Forest School Leader you will need to have completed OCN unit Level 3 (Forest School Practitioners' Award).**

**OCN Level 1 – Forest School Skills Award**

30/60 learning hours: An introduction to Forest Schools

Entry requirements: An interest in working with people in the outdoor environment

Course content: This is a three day course for parents, young people (14-19yrs) adult volunteers, nursery nurses, teachers etc who have an interest in working with young people in the outdoors.

**OCN Level 2- Assistant Forest School Practitioner Award**

60 learning hours: Qualification that will enable you to assist a Forest School leader. Two courses are available; one general and one child-care based

Entry requirements: Either Level 1 or previous experience working with chosen client group.

Course content: This award is for students who wish to assist the Forest School Practitioner. This qualification forms two-thirds of the Practitioners qualification and can be used as prior learning if required

### **OCN Level 3- Forest School Practitioners Award**

90 learning hours: Qualification to become a Forest School Leader.

Entry requirements: Any level 2 relevant qualification i.e., Forest School, PGCE, CACHE, Play Work, Youth Work, Probation Care, Woodland/ Countryside Management and 2 years experience working with client group with a portfolio including references and evidence

What you will be trained to do: This award will enable you to run an alternative complementary curriculum outside. If you have relevant Level 2 qualifications, and are over 21 years old, you can work with your chosen client group and run your Forest School independently

Course Content: Before the course, trainees should attend a 2 day 'First Aid in the Outdoors' qualification (ITC) Immediate Temporary Care. The Level 3 course is approximately 50% practical and 50% theory. The theory content is split into 3 units:  
Forest School Practical Skills and Woodland Management  
Learning and Development at Forest School  
Establishment and Delivery of a Forest School Programme  
These units will include elements on Health & Safety, self-esteem, emotional learning, behavior and identifying natural learning preferences of young people aged between 3 and 18 years.

Approximately three months after the course, participants will attend a 3-day course. This will include tutorial time, and further practical training and assessments.

After a further 3 months participants will be assessed at a venue of their choice working with their chosen client group.

**ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE A CURRENT AND CLEAR CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU CHECK.**

**Unfortunately this year we will not be running application workshops, however, assistance can be gained by contacting your Cluster Group contact or from the Forestry Commission. See our Regional Webpage or Additional Information sheet for details.**

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## Forest School Training providers

## Annex 1b

Within the West Midlands Government Region we are supporting the present training providers:

**Shropshire Council, in conjunction with Walford College of Agriculture are running a number of OCN courses throughout the year.**

**Contact: Alice Savery, Shropshire County Council for availability and dates**

Shropshire Council, Development Officers, Floor 2, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6ND

**Email** [Alice.Savery@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Alice.Savery@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Worcestershire County Council support OCN FS Training through –**

Bishops Wood Centre, Crossway Green, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire DY13 9SE

**Contact** 01299 250513 Forest School Coordinator

**Email** [forestschool@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:forestschool@worcestershire.gov.uk)

**Anney Thornton-Wood** Cambium - Sustainable Landscapes & Training

Pump Row, Broad Oak, Hereford, HR2 8QU

**Tel: 01981 580132**

**Email:** [cambiumsus@btinternet.com](mailto:cambiumsus@btinternet.com)

**Archimedes Training**, Wood Lane House Farm and Countryside Centre, Wood lane, Stannington Sheffield. S6 5HE.

**Tel 0114 2855534**

**Email:**[info@archimedes-training.co.uk](mailto:info@archimedes-training.co.uk)

**This list will be updated as and when other credited training providers in the West Midlands Region are known.**

This information should be read together with that given in this Forest School Woodland Improvement Grant Guide note before completing that accompanies the EWGS Forest School WIG application form and map.

**Funding Option** Please tick the relevant box to indicate your chosen funding option.

**Application Map** On your application map, show the entire woodland area/ catchment area/school grounds, that will be included in the Forest School project site, with a Grid Reference for the site access (SJ 123 456). Enter the area onto the schedule on the back of form EWGS 1 as a single entry with one reference (e.g. 1a)

**Completing the EWGS1 Form** Complete all relevant sections using the EWGS 1 Guidance Notes

## Completing the EWGS Forest School Form

**Section 1** Your application name for the project or school name

**Section 2** We want to know if you have applied for Forestry Commission Funding before. If so, please give your contract reference number.

**Section 3** If you are using woodland or other land where the Forest School activity will take place then we need to see an agreement/ letter between yourself and the other owner that Forest School activities can take place.

Applications on private woodland will need to have a Single Business Identifier (SBI) number. If the area of woodland is in a different ownership or off school grounds then the wood must be registered with the Rural Land Register (RLR) in the name of the legal owner. See our FC Operations No 19 for further information relating to both these matters. **School grounds are excluded from registering with the RLR and do not need to obtain an SBI number**

**Section 4** Enter here the total cost of your Forest School project that you seek funding for under this Challenge fund. Please list what amount of grant aid you are seeking from the Forestry Commission in relation to your total spend on this initiative.

**Section 5** This section helps the judges decide which applications should be offered grant support. It is therefore important to complete it fully, answering the following 11 questions:

1. Indicate the distance of the site from the proposed users.

2. Describe the access to the site. Will this be on foot? Is vehicle parking required? What special requirements will be made for disabled users? Is the entire site open to the public or only part?

3. Describe the type of woodland in which the Forest School is to be established. For example, is this young or well-established woodland? Ancient wood?

4. Give details of who has Forest School Leader accreditation and will run the Forest School sessions (or details of training underway naming your nominated training candidate).

5. How many participants (children or groups) are expected to use the site, what will be the leader to participant ratio?

6. What groups will be using the Forest School? Will the site be open to users other than school members?

7. How regularly will be the Forest School sessions for each group e.g. daily, weekly etc? How many weeks in the school year will it run?

8. Please explain the Forest School's involvement with the local FEI cluster group? If possible, name the cluster that you are linked too.

9. Give details of any planned evaluation of learning and personal development of those involved in Forest School sessions. If Leader training is to be grant aided, please provide details of the training provider.

10. Give details of...

- Current or proposed qualifications in First Aid
- Risk assessments required
- Child protection policy
- Emergency procedures
- Appropriate Criminal Record Bureau checks
- Insurance.

11. Any other information you believe is necessary to go with your application.

**Section 6** Enter code number from the Forest School Table.

**Section 7** You can **only claim for items listed in the Forest School Table** on pages 3 & 4 of this Guidance note.

Briefly describe the work and items for which grant is required, in order to give a fuller specifications of non-standard cost items.

Here you need to list the items that make up your costs. Enter your requirements here in list form – e.g. Kelly Kettle and on the next line, Wet Weather Clothing

**Section 8** Tick the box as for financial year that you will claim the entire grant.

**Section 9** Enter the quantity you need to purchase.

**Section 10** Enter the total cost for that work item.

**Section 11** Additional space for any other relevant comments