

June 2009

East England: Forest School Challenge Fund

Background The Forest School initiative 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.

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.

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, and gain the landowner's 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 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.

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 Schools allow participants to grow and discover their abilities without fear of criticism or failure.

Forest Schools 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 Schools can help develop and learn 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.

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Forest Schools East is the initiative that will help Forest Schools to develop in the East of England, giving participants in the region the opportunity to explore and learn in their local environment. The aim is to set up Forest Schools throughout the region under the banner of Forest Schools East. For further information see

www.forest-schools-east.org

This is supported by the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) Challenge Fund. The WIG offers schools, sport groups, youth groups, environmental charities and other organisations the opportunity to apply for a grant, which will support setting up a Forest School site.

Forest Schools East also offers training for teachers to investigate and lead their own Forest Schools. This is supported by Green Light Trust, an environment-based Suffolk charity that will provide the training in the region, allowing participants to train and learn in their local environment. For further information see www.greenlighttrust.org

The WIG Fund

The Forestry Commission East England Region has secured £60,000 to support the concept of Forest Schools in the East of England. This WIG fund must be disbursed within financial years 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.

We welcome strategic applications from Local Authorities and Higher Education establishments. However, if you are applying as a single school we recommend you apply for the Forest School package highlighted below:

Forest School Package

If you require more than one staff member to be trained (i.e. 1 Level 3 practitioner and 2 Level 1 support staff) please add this cost to the package using the codes in table 2.

If you are not working with a Forest School support service we recommend that you remove this cost from the package.

Work Item Code F1

Forest School Package includes:

£950 – Forest School training. This can be spent on one Forest School Leader Award or a series of Level 1 qualifications.

£150 – Forest School tools. This can include wet weather gear, potato peelers, bows saws etc.

£500 – Forest School support. This can be used to pay for Forest School support sessions.

Total package cost = £1600

Work Items (see below table)

Funding will be used to support the infrastructure for Forest Schools. The priority of this Challenge Fund will be given to the set-up cost involved with Forest Schools using Codes F1 to F7. Codes F8 to F10 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.

Work Item		Code	
The cost of Level 1 Forest Schools Leader training. £285	F2	Wet weather gear	F7
The cost of Level 3 Forest Schools Leader training. £950	F3	General materials and supplies	F8
Initial Tree Safety Audits £320 (with report)	F4	Forest School support and delivery costs	F9
Remedial arboricultural £150 per day	F5	Other	F10
Forest School kit bags, tools, ropes etc £75	F6		

Where does the WIG apply? The fund is available in the East England Government Office region, which encompasses the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, plus unitary authority of Peterborough. Projects selected for funding will be spread throughout the region, nominally at least one per county.

What proportion of costs can be paid? Priority will be given to areas where no Forest School is currently in operation. 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 WIG fund is limited to payments in the financial years 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.

Applications are welcome from 1st June 2009, all application must be received by 29th January 2010, and work must be undertaken and claim submitted by 2nd March 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. **This means you will have to find funds and then claim back once all the purchases are completed.** You must do all the work agreed and maintain the facilities to our reasonable satisfaction.

Work must be undertaken and your claim submitted by 2nd March 2011

Further Information and Advice For further information on Forest Schools and training please contact:

Sunny Singh
Forest School Development Advisor
Green Light Trust
The Foundry
Bury Road
Lawshall
Suffolk
IP29 4PJ
Tel: 01284 830829
E: sunny@greenlighttrust.org

For further information on the obtaining maps or queries on the application process contact:

Andrew Hoppit
Forestry Commission
East of England Region
Santon Downham
Brandon
Suffolk
IP27 0TJ
Tel: 01842 815544
Email: east.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

The information is also available on:
www.forestry.gov.uk/eastengland
www.forest-schools-east.org

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 Entry Level:

30 learning hours:	An introduction to Forest School for people with additional learning needs.
Entry requirements:	No qualifications needed.
Course content:	This qualification is for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. It covers practical work in outdoor areas.

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 3 – Forest School Practitioners Award

90 learning hours:	Qualification to become a Forest School Leader. Two courses are available; one general and one child-care based.
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 starts there will be a 2 day 'First Aid in the Outdoors' qualification (ITC) Immediate Temporary Care. The course is approximately 50% practical and 50% theory. The theory content will include elements on Health & Safety, self-esteem, emotional learning, behaviour and identifying natural learning preferences of young people aged between 3 and 18 years. Individuals can chose course elements relating to 0 to 8 years or 8 to 18 years depending upon their client group or specific specialism's. Approximately three months after the course, participants will attend a 3-day residential course. This will include tutorial time, and further practical training and assessments. After 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.

Bridgwater College in Somerset has developed a BTEC Award in Forest Schools to give Early-Years practitioners, playgroup leaders and other professionals who work with Children, the chance to take forward outdoor learning and education.

BTEC Award in Forest Skills – Level 1 Course

40 learning hours: This course is ideal if you wish to support a Forest School Leader.
Entry requirements: No qualifications needed.
Course content: You will learn to plan appropriate activities and experiences aimed to promote self-esteem, learning and development.

BTEC Award for Forest Leaders – Level 3 Course

90 learning hours: This course is designed to build on previous knowledge and experience of the participants.
Entry requirements: A Level – One qualification – The BTEC Award in Forest School Skills.
Course content: The training covers a variety of subjects from child development to Health and Safety.

Making an application

Annex 2

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.

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

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 Please indicate where your Forest School will take place.

Section 4 Enter here the total cost of your Forest School project .Please list what percentage 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 will be applying for Forest School Leader accreditation and who will run the Forest School sessions (or details of training underway).

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. if you are linked to a Forest Education Innovative cluster group, please explain the Forest School's involvement with the local FEI group?

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 page 3 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 relevant comments.