

Version 4/March 2009
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Woodland Improvement Grant Guide

Purpose

Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) is focused on initiating and securing targeted change to remove threats to, and take opportunities for, the delivery of public benefits from woodlands. The grant therefore supports capital investment work in woodlands to create, enhance and sustain the social, environmental and economic public benefits that woodlands provide.

Funds

WIG grants are currently focussed on three national priorities: SSSI Condition, Biodiversity and Public Access.

In addition to the nationally available funds, there are several other funds that reflect regionally specific priorities such as Forest Schools. Regional funds operate on either a percentage contribution basis as per the national funds, or as a challenge fund operating on a competitive bidding process. Brief details of some of the regional funds are included in this guidance, but you should contact your local region for the latest details.



Summary of Regional EWGS WIG Funds

Region	Percentage contribution of standard costs by WIG Fund						WIG Challenge Funds
	SSSI Woodland Condition	Priority UK BAP targets	UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets	Red squirrel reserves	Priority Woodland Access	Woodland Access	Forest School
North West	80	80	50	80	80	50	–
North East	80	80	50	80	80	50	–
Yorkshire & The Humber	80	80	50	80	80	50	–
East Midlands	80	80	50	–	80	50	–
West Midlands	80	80	50	–	80	50	Bids
East England and London	80	80	50	–	80	50	Bids
South West	80	80	50	–	80	50	–
South East	80	80	50	80	80	50	–

Eligibility

Biodiversity Fund details

Each WIG fund is cash limited in any one year. The grant is allocated to applications on a ‘first-come, first-served’ basis, except where a judging round is used to compare and select applications for funding, e.g. for a Challenge fund. **Grant money will only be allocated to complete and acceptable applications.** Before applying applicants should check that whether funds are still available, by looking at the regional grant availability pages (www.forestry.gov.uk/england-regions).

Woodland Biodiversity 50 Fund	Fund Reference BIO 50
50% contribution to standard costs on a ‘first-come, first-served’ basis	
For delivery of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets	
This includes the protection of ancient and semi-natural woodlands and restoration of ancient woodland sites and native woodland habitat types. The fund also applies where grant is crucial to delivery of UK Species Action Plan (SAP) targets. See www.ukbap.org.uk for more information.	
Regional availability	
Available in all regions of England	
Applicants are urged to research the needs of the woodland type, habitat or species that they propose to work with, before applying.	

Woodland SSSI 8o Fund	Fund Reference SSSI 8o
80% contribution to standard costs on a 'first-come, first-served' basis	
For any work in SSSIs that help restore or maintain favourable condition status.	
Deer management can be supported in non-SSSI woodlands under this fund, where it will help deliver improving condition in nearby SSSI woodlands. <i>Operations Note 12 – Deer Support Under EWGS</i> , available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments , provides further guidance.	
The SSSI 8o fund cannot normally pay for non-woodland work or converting woodland to other land uses.	
The SSSI conditions are as determined by Natural England. Further guidance is available at www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/ .	
Regional availability	
Available in all regions of England	
Applicants are urged to discuss their proposals with the FC to determine what work is necessary before making an application.	

Priority UK BAP Fund	Fund Reference BIO 8o
80% contribution to standard costs on a 'first-come, first-served' basis	
For delivery of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) regional priorities	
Regional availability	
A summary of priority UK BAP fund availability is detailed below. For detailed regional guidance contact your local FC office or www.forestry.gov.uk/england-regions .	
East England – ancient woodland priority areas.	
East Midlands – priority woodland bird areas.	
North East – priority woodland bird areas and all ancient or native woodland currently in unfavourable condition, where the work will help achieve recovering status.	
North West – priority woodland bird and butterfly areas.	
South East – various priority areas throughout the region, particularly ancient woodlands in AONBs.	
South West – ancient woodland priority areas.	
West Midlands – Wyre Forest project area, priority woodland bird areas.	
Yorkshire & Humber – priority woodland bird areas.	



Red Squirrel 80 Fund

Fund Reference REDS 80

80% contribution to standard costs on a 'first-come, first-served' basis.

For Red squirrel conservation work in Red squirrel reserves and buffer zones
See Operations Note 010a & 010b for further guidance available from local FC offices or FC website.

Only available in designated Red squirrel reserves. These comprise the Isle of Wight, the Poole Harbour Islands and the 16 areas in northern England indicated on the following map. For detailed boundaries of these eligible areas please contact your local FC office.

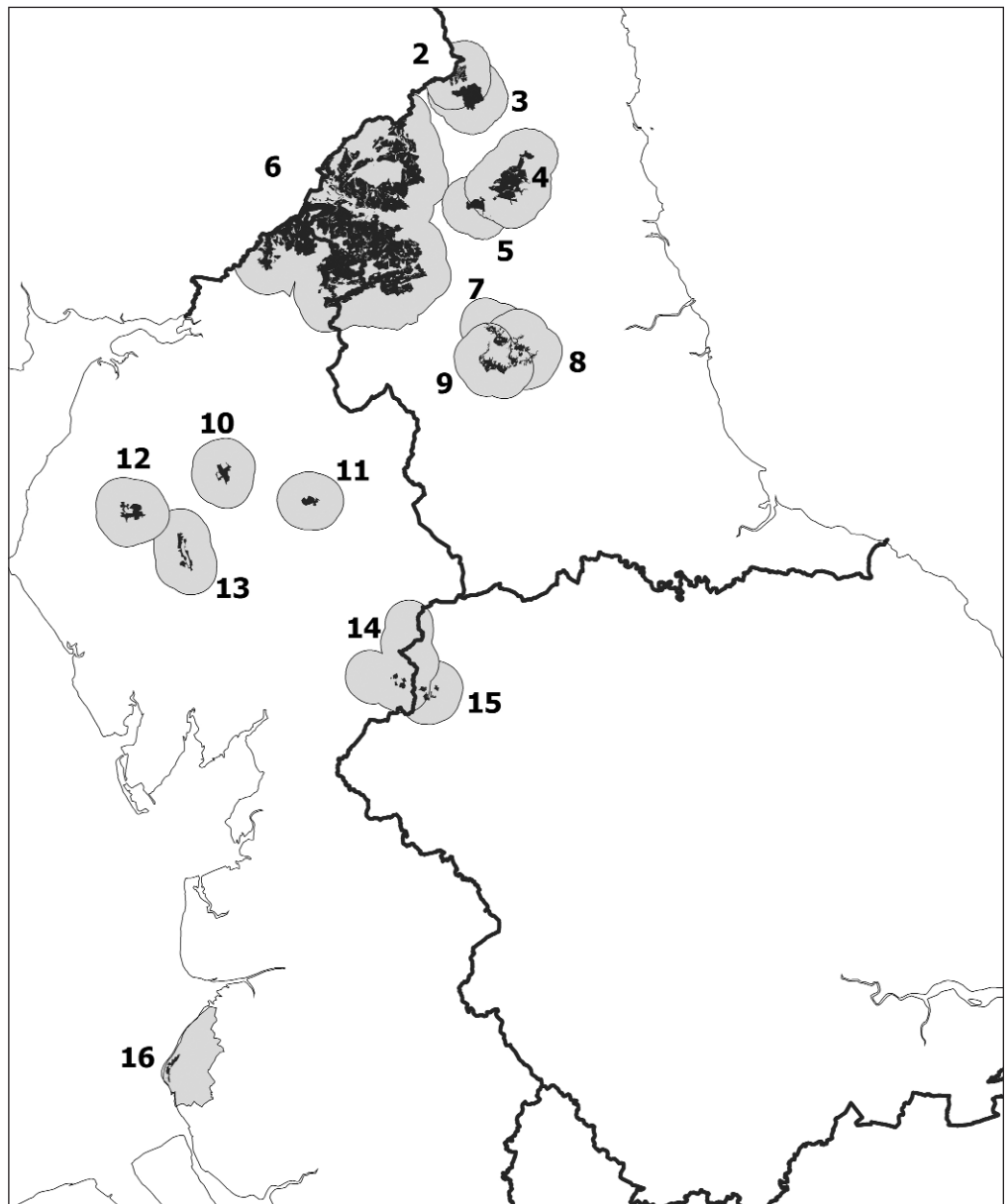
Regional availability

Region	Eligible areas
North West, North East Yorkshire & The Humber	Designated Red squirrel reserves (and 5km buffer zones) lying within England. This includes the newly designated Greenfield Red squirrel reserve in North Yorkshire.
South East	Isle of Wight
South West	Poole Harbour Islands
North East	This fund can also be used in woodlands identified as core clusters for the delivery of woodland bird targets, where work is proposed to enhance the general woodland habitat or work to assist specific priority birds species.



**Red Squirrel Reserves
(and buffer zones) in the
North of England**

1. Kylee
2. Uswayford
3. Kidland
4. Harwood
5. Raylees
6. Kielder
7. Dipton/Dukeshouse Wood
8. Healy/Kellas
9. Slaley/Dukesfield
10. Greystoke
11. Whinfall
12. Whinlatter
13. Thirlmere
14. Garsdale/Mallerstang
15. Whiddale
16. Sefton



Public Access Fund details

Woodland Access 50 Fund Priority Woodland Access 80 Fund	Fund Reference ACES 50 Fund Reference ACES 80
50 or 80% contribution to standard costs on a 'first-come, first-served' basis	
For the provision and improvement of facilities for free public access to woodlands where there is a need	
These funds can be applied to both existing woodlands and newly created community woodlands funded under EWGS, provided there is a need for more or improved woodland public access in that location.	
The woodland must be accessible for free, quiet enjoyment by the public (including dogs on leads) during daylight hours for at least 11 months of each year.	
Regional availability	
80% funding is available for access provision/improvement in priority areas of the country. These are described as "Quality of Place" priority areas that take into account areas of high population, deprivation indices and current lack of public access provision. Maps showing the distribution and precise location of the priority areas are available on the Land Information Search www.forestry.gov.uk/england-lis .	
Woodland outside the Quality of Place priority areas are eligible for 50% funding where there is less than 1 hectare of free public access for every 500 residents within 8km.	

Determining a need for new or improved public access

The general rule used to determine whether there is a need for more or improved access is that within 8km of the entrance to the woodland, the area of existing free public access woodland must be less than 1 hectare per 500 people.

Population estimates by electoral ward may be obtained from www.nomisweb.co.uk (click on Census2001). More detailed guidance on extracting this information and estimating the population that is local to the woodland is available from FC offices.

The area of woodland deemed to be providing access will be estimated from the 'Woods for people' dataset obtained from the Land Information Search facility via the FC website page www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs. This is the most current inventory of accessible woodland.

If demand cannot be demonstrated using this method then the woodland cannot normally qualify for WIG access funding. In exceptional circumstances, access projects that cannot satisfy this general criterion may still be justified subject to FC discretion based on more detailed assessment of need and public support within the community concerned. Further guidance is contained in *Operations Note 013 – WMG: Public Access Exceptional Circumstances*, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments.



Operation of WIG funds

Standard Costs

EWGS WIG grants are based on 'standard costs' (a typical cost for a given piece of work) to conform to national agreements with the EU. This means that a range of operations and tasks has been independently costed based on typical scenarios, including materials, labour and supervision costs. **The WIG contribution rate (e.g. 50%, 80% etc.) is applied to these standard costs to set a grant rate for the work.** The rate of grant for a work item is not negotiable.

Grants derived from standard costs in this way do not cover every eventuality nor do they guarantee to cover a particular proportion of an applicant's actual costs. Applicants are strongly advised to estimate the grant value and the actual cost of the proposed work before deciding to submit an application.

The up to date list of operations and costs that can be funded are contained in *Operations Note 9 – Standard Costs*, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments.

In order to specify the proposed operations, the current standard cost, % contribution and hence total amount of grant support, applicants should complete the WIG Cost Calculator which is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wig, or your local FC office.

Spreading grant payments and costs

WIG investments are treated as discrete projects for which grant is paid on completion. However, where a woodland improvement project requires work to be carried out over a number of years, for instance where follow-up work is required to secure the initial work, the total grant can be paid in agreed parts.

One payment can be made each year over a maximum period of 5 years or any shorter period required or specified by the WIG fund concerned. Applicants can propose a spread of payments in their application and the FC will check that each part of the grant can be paid in future years before agreeing it.

Complementary funding

WIG may be paid on top of other EWGS grants, including other WIG payments, provided each EWGS payment is for different or additional work and is therefore only funded once. EWGS WIG funds may also be used in this way to secure and continue work started under the previous Woodland Grant Scheme.

Whilst EWGS cannot pay two grants for the same work, WIG funded work may nevertheless receive additional funding from other sources, such as local authorities. This is only acceptable, however, if the additional funds are not co-financed by the EU and the total funding for the work (from all sources) does not exceed 100% of the costs. WIG payments may be reduced or withheld if either of these conditions is not met.

Where any additional funds are paying for different work to the WIG fund, then these restrictions on complementary funding will not apply to that part of the work. WIG may therefore be used to support other projects in the region by funding any eligible woodland elements of wider programmes, such as tourism or restoration initiatives. In these circumstances, the intentions and purpose of the WIG funds must not in any way be diminished by the other work, otherwise WIG payments may be withheld or recovered with interest.

Funding limits

Each fund is cash limited within each region, each year. The rules governing the fund allocation and how applications will be considered are contained in *Operations Note 7 – Grant Budget Management Policy*, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments.

WIG Challenge funds

Where a WIG fund is operated on a challenge basis, the region will determine the specific eligibility criteria and operating details. Applications will be selected from those received within a published application window and selection will normally involve a prescribed scoring or judging process determined by the region. Details of Challenge funds are included in the annual regional grant prospectuses available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-regions and full application details and requirements are available from the sponsoring FC offices.

Making an Application

Before preparing an application, we recommend you check that there is funding still available for the work you wish to propose. This will avoid wasted time preparing an application if funds are already fully subscribed. To find out whether there is funding still available, contact your local FC office or look at the grant availability webpage for your region, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-regions.

The application comprises the completed forms and an acceptable map.

The applicant should:

- complete form *EWGS 1* and
- complete form *EWGS 5* or the *WIG cost calculator* which is a Microsoft Excel file, and
- provide an Ordnance Survey MasterMap® showing the boundary of the woodland areas that the grant will be applied to.

Where tree felling is proposed then form *EWGS 4 – Felling Permission and Woodland Regeneration Grant* should also be completed.

WIG Calculator Guidance

Introduction

The WIG calculator helps applicants and the FC set out the proposed work, their standard costs, the profile of work and from this will calculate the level of grant that will be offered over the period of the contract. It ensures the latest standard cost rates can be used and updates made more quickly where appropriate.

The WIG calculator is available on the website www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wig, or from your local Forestry Commission office. Please ensure you have the most up to date version (as per the website) to ensure you are picking up the current standard cost operations and rates.

A separate spreadsheet needs to be completed for each WIG fund and for each individual project within that fund. For example, an application for WIG SSSI and priority access would normally require 2 calculators completing. We suggest copying the number of sheets at the beginning.

Applicants need to fill in the yellow boxes on the form and the spreadsheet will identify the standard costs, calculate the total cost and total grant. The Forestry Commission will complete those sections in green. Some of the white boxes will automatically populate themselves based on your entries in the yellow boxes. You cannot edit any other part of the form except the yellow boxes.

In order to fill in the calculator, we recommend you first print off the list of standard costs that are on the worksheet “standardcosts” – this will provide easy reference when filling in the work details.

Completing the spreadsheet

WIG Fund

Select what kind of WIG you're applying for from the drop down list. Describe the specific fund (if there is one) e.g. "East Midland Bird WIG" or "SW Ancient Woodland Priority Areas".

Property name

Enter the name of the property, which should match form EWGS 1.

Region

Choose which region your woodland is located from the drop down list.

Summary of operation/aims

Briefly describe why the work is being proposed, what you hope to achieve and any general details of the operation that may be appropriate to note.

Work areas (optional)

You can fill this in if the project covers most or all of these work areas. If you have completed column 3 of the work details table there is no need to fill this section in.

Area of work

This should normally add up to the total area of the work areas affected, unless the work is only happening in particular parts of the work area.

Work details

Code

Enter the code for the operation you wish to carry out, for example A14 for picnic bench with table, or F1 for stock fencing. When you enter the code, other parts of the table should automatically populate themselves.

Quantity

Enter the number of units you propose, noting what units the standard costs use. For example, for 400 metres of fencing you should enter 400; if you propose producing 1000 A4 public access leaflets, these are measured in units of 500 leaflets so you should enter a quantity of 2.

Work areas affected

List the work areas where each operation will take place. If you have completed the earlier work area section there is no need to fill this in unless you need to highlight the location of particular work.

Notes

Use this section to add brief additional information about the operation.

Claim year profile

Pick the claim years you plan to carry out the work from the drop down lists. Enter the percentage against each year, based on when you intend to carry out the work. The total percentage will appear in red unless it totals 100%.

Further notes

This section can be used to add any extra information that may be of relevance.

Supervision costs

If supervision is required, this should be added as the final work detail, using code "L2" (agent hourly rate).

Calculator results

Once you have filled in the yellow boxes, the orange section of the calculator shows:

- the total for the whole project;
- what the grant contribution will be;
- how the grant will be paid over the 5 years, based on your proposed work profile.

Completing form EWGS 5 Woodland Improvement Grant

Page 1

Item 1 Property Name and Application No.

Enter the property name and application number as per the General Details form (EWGS 1).

Item 2 Case Ref. No.

Applicants should leave this blank.

Item 3 This section is for general prescriptions of the proposals. Applicants can refer to these prescriptions when entering the new woodland details overleaf to avoid repetition. See the guidance for Column 12 before completing this question.

Item 4 Challenge Funds

This section is only completed if the WIG fund is operated as a Challenge fund.

Each Challenge fund will have its own specific criteria and guidance available from the sponsoring region. The Challenge fund guidance will also explain how to use form *EWGS 5* (or other form) to apply to that particular fund.

Pages 2 and 3

Grouping operations into projects

You should individual work items together where it forms a 'project'. For example, a project involves rhododendron control could involve work items V16 (cutting) and V17 (spraying regrowth). Leave a blank line between each project to show how the work items are grouped together.

Column 5 WIG Fund Reference

Refer to the 'eligibility' section of this guide and enter the reference for the WIG fund.

Column 6 Work Item Reference

Refer to the 'Standard Cost' tables from the current version of Operations Note 9 and select the work that is to be included. The reference code (e.g. V16) is required but applicants may also enter a short description beside the references if this is helpful.

Column 7 Unit

Enter the unit for each work item as set out in the Standard Cost tables.

Column 8 Number of Units

Enter the number of units proposed to cover the whole job. Area and length units can be entered to two decimal places.

Repeat steps 7 to 9 to list the other work items in the work group.

Column 9 Grant Rate

This is optional. The FC will calculate the final grant values to be entered into any grant agreement but applicants may use this column to estimate the actual grant each work item will attract if it is approved.

To estimate the grant value applied for

Take the standard cost per unit and multiply this by the number of units proposed
e.g. £230 / 100m X 6.2 units (i.e. 620m) = £1426.00

Then apply the WIG fund percentage contribution to get the grant value
e.g. 70% of £1426.00 = £998.20

Column 10 Spreading Payments

Once all the work items for each project have been listed, applicants can use these columns to choose whether the total grant is paid in one or more parts.

Up to five sequential Claim Years can be used for each WIG agreement. A Claim Year is the period 1 April to 31 March (1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 for example, is noted as 09/10).

If the entire grant for each project is to be claimed as a lump sum then simply enter the proposed claim year in the row beside the first work item and enter 100% below it. The work must be completed before the claim is made.

If the total grant for the project is to be claimed in several parts, enter the relevant claim years in the column headings and enter the estimated percentage of the total grant that will be claimed in each year. They must all add up to 100%, and each part of the work must be completed before each claim is made.

Each project can have a different spread of payments provided they all fit within the same five-year period.

Column 11 Subcompartments in which the work will take place

List all the subcompartment areas where the work will take place, or that will benefit from the work. The detail of all these areas should already have been entered into the schedule on form *EWGS 1 – General Details*.

Column 12 Details of the Proposed Work

Set out briefly how and where the work is to take place.

If the payment is to be spread over more than one year, indicate the order of the work and show what each part of the grant is for.





WIG Agreements

The general obligations placed on holders of WIG agreements are that the work funded must be completed and claimed as agreed, and the work funded must be maintained for at least five years from the date of each payment.

In addition to this general requirement, payments made from a Public Access fund carry a further commitment to allow public access to the woodland for longer periods. The period depends on the total value of these payments in any one five-year agreement and they are as follows.

Total Public Access WIG payments	Public Access commitment period
Up to £10,000	10 years
Up to £20,000	20 years
Over £20,000	30 years

Claims and Payments

Applicants are fully expected to take up offers of grant and claim their funding in the year agreed. Those who do not take up an offer of WIG funding in the time agreed may be able to reschedule the work provided the FC is notified beforehand and the agreement is changed to reflect the new Claim Years. The FC will try to accommodate requests to reschedule the payments into a different Claim Year but there is no guarantee that this will be possible and the offer of grant may be withdrawn.

If grants are not paid before the agreed Claim Year ends (i.e. they have not been claimed or the work is not complete or not acceptable) then the offer of grant will expire and no right to the grant will exist. Any request to reschedule claim years will be considered against the principles set out in *Operations Note 7 – Grant Budget Management Policy*, available at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments.

No part of the grant can be paid unless the part of the work it relates to is completed before the claim is made. Improvement projects that are only partially completed and which have not produced the intended change or outcomes may require full repayment, with interest.

Getting help

The FC will offer advice and help you come to decisions about management of your woodland but cannot help you draw up a management plan, though there is grant support towards producing one. Obtaining professional assistance to draw up your Plan is likely to be a worthwhile investment if you intend to seek further support, approvals and grants on the basis of the Plan.

The application forms, plan template, guidance and examples are available from www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs-wpg, as is more detailed guidance on this particular grant and the full FC code covering the operation of the EWGS.

Further advice

The Forestry Commission website contains all of the information regarding EWGS and the forms needed to apply, in particular:

www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs – EWGS homepage

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-ewgsdocuments – EWGS document library

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-regions – Regional webpages that include details of regionally focussed grants

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-lis – The Land Information Search tool, telling you about special designations, features and other grant schemes that are displayed in map form

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-grants – FC England Grants and Regulations homepage.

This provides links to all aspects of woodland regulations, grants available and public registers of felling/planting proposals

If you do not have access to the internet, you can request any of the information from your local Forestry Commission office.

We recommend getting professional advice on woodland management and grants. A list of national and regional professional organisations are listed at

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-advice or available from your local FC office.

This document is for information only and does not constitute an agreement of any form nor does it confer any rights. It is intended as a guide to help applicants decide whether the grant is applicable to them and whether the main requirements of any grant agreement can be met. The information is subject to change. Full and current details of the grant scheme and the requirements of any EWGS grant contract that may be made between the applicant(s) and the Forestry Commission arising from an application to the grant scheme can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/ewgs