

English Woodland Grant Scheme 2009

North West England Region

April 2009 - Update

The scheme is supported with European Union and Defra funding

Following the success of EWGS in the North West in 2008, we open EWGS 2009 with higher grant rates, higher percentage contributions and eased eligibility criteria. Within the context of additional RDPE funding we will be looking, for example, to offer additional contributions for Woodland Creation Grants of up to £2000 per hectare, with the option of 09-10 or 10-11 payment years. We see these enhancements as a major opportunity for existing and new landowners to seek EWGS funding for the positive management of existing woodlands and the creation of new woodlands delivering economic, social and environmental values. For further details please see below:

New Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG) available from 1st March 2009

New Woodland Improvement Grants are now open for applications.

The main changes include:

- 80% contributions for achieving and maintaining favourable status on SSSI's
- 80% contributions for work that benefits birds and butterflies in priority areas (maps in preparation)
- 80% contributions for work that benefits access in priority areas (maps in preparation)

- Removal of £7k ceiling for WIG Access applications

- The standard costs have been reviewed, with an average 20% increase to reflect cost trends.
- These will be introduced from the 1st March along with an excel 'WIG cost calculator' in place of form EWGS 5

Higher payment rates for Woodland Planning Grant (WPG)

From the 1st March, new WPG applications will be paid in 2010/2011 at the following rates:

- £20/ha for the first 100 Hectares of woodland on the property
- £10/ha thereafter
- £1000 minimum payment

Forest Plans that are expiring are now eligible for WPG and we are developing a process so we can approve thinning, felling and restocking proposals as part of the WPG process. This will help woodland owners comply with imminent new public body timber procurement policies – further details will be issued in the coming months.

Woodland Management Grant – certification threshold raised

We are now open for WMG applications with first payment in Autumn 2010. The threshold for certification requirement will be lifted to 100Ha; woodlands between 30 and 100 hectares will no longer require certification to be eligible, but will need to have an approved management plan.

From now on, all WMG contracts will be offered with a 5 calendar year contract period i.e. 1st January to 31st December. Contracts must be approved by the 15th May in order to receive Autumn payment, otherwise we have to defer payment for a year. Therefore from 1st March we will be processing applications where the work should start from 1st January 2010, the contract must be signed approved by 15th May latest and first WMG payment will be made in Autumn 2010.

Any unapproved WMG contracts with first payment in Autumn 2009 must be signed and returned by the 15th May 2009, otherwise it will have to be deferred for a year.

Woodland Creation Grant - £2000 additional contributions

When WCG opens 1st May 2009, we will be offering new additional contributions of up to £2000.

Targeted in-year payment (09-10) and 10-11 payment year options will be available

We are currently looking at WCG targeting options for the Additional Contributions for 09-10 and 10-11 payment years.

Due to recent changes in EU rules, landowners will remain eligible to claim SPS on land where woodland is planted from 2008. As Farm Woodland Payment (FWP) takes account of SPS income forgone, we will have to reduce the rate of FWP, but we aim to make the reduction less than the expected SPS payment – therefore the overall annual payment should remain the same or higher than the existing FWP rates.

Further details on the WCG 2009 arrangements will be included in another email alert shortly.

Woodland Regeneration Grant

We will open 1st May for WRG applications with 2010/2011 first payment. There are no plans for rate changes, but this year we will be seeking co-finance approval under RDPE for this grant. This will mean an increase in WRG funding and greater flexibility to adjust budgets between grants where appropriate

We are in the process of updating all of the EWGS literature and webpages to reflect the above changes and aim to have up to date information for applicants in shortly.

Kevin May
Grants, Regulations and Partnership Manager,
Forestry Commission – North West England

Sources of further information

1. If you require further information contact your local Woodland Officer –

Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester:

Paul Vickers (01606 889912); paul.vickers@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Lancashire: currently shared between Paul Vickers and James Bickley

Lancaster City/South Cumbria: James Bickley (017687 76616) james.anderson-bickley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

West Cumbria: Peter Fox (017687 76616); peter.fox@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

East Cumbria: Jim O'Neill (017687 76616); jim.o'neill@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

2. For NW E specific grant details on the Web see: www.forestry.gov.uk/northwestengland-grants

3 Forestry Commission England runs the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) to support and promote the national and regional delivery of forestry policy, as set out in the Government's Rural Strategy. EWGS is part of the Defra family of environmental support. Further information about these schemes can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm>. EWGS is a part of the Rural Development Plan for England (RDPE).