



English Woodland Grant Scheme

Prospectus 2006 – *South West England* *Conservancy*

The Forestry Commission (England) opened its second Grant Prospectus to applications and grant offers under the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) in April 2006. This regional Prospectus provides an overview of the grant budgets that will be available in **South West England** in financial year 2007/08. This Prospectus also gives details of special transition arrangements for certain grant applications (under the 2005 Prospectus) due for payment in 2006/07.

EWGS is part of the devolved and targeted approach that was announced in the Government's Rural Strategy, published in 2004. Our regional approach to supporting England's woodlands is described in Annex 1.

The South West Woodland and Forestry Framework

The SW Regional Development Agency, Government Office for the South West and other regional partners published the Regional Woodland and Forestry Framework in 2005. Woods and forests cover almost 9% of this region and the Framework promotes the importance of woodlands to the region and the potential for them to contribute much more across a broad spectrum of issues. At the same time our collective regional responsibility as custodians of our woods and forests was recognised. The Framework is available via www.forestry.gov.uk/southwestengland

An Implementation Plan for the Framework was published in April 2006 setting out the actions required over the next three years. Many organisations and landowners will be contributing and the plan is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/sw-rff

The Forestry Commission will be supporting or leading a number of the actions identified through grants or through partnership working. This document sets out how the EWGS grant, to be paid in 2007-08, will support the Regional Framework. This will, in particular, highlight ancient woodlands and a Woodland Creation scoring form that reflects the Regional Framework's priorities.

Laura Jones
Conservator
South West England Conservancy
Forestry Commission England

Financial Context for Grant Offers

Our budget for grants in 2007/08 will be **£3.6 million**. After allowing for claims expected in 2007/08 from holders of existing approved contracts, we anticipate that there will be **£2.08** million available to support new business, including some rescheduled by agreement with applicants. We plan to allocate our resources for new business as follows:

- **approximately £1,230,000** for **woodland creation**;
- **up to £150,000** for **woodland regeneration** and **restocking** following felling;
- **up to £85,000** for woodland accepted into EWGS contracts under the **Woodland Management Grant** to help secure long-term stewardship of woodlands;
- up to **£50,000** will be targeted for specific work on public access and **£380,000** on Biodiversity Action Plan priorities to improve woodlands and their benefits to people and wildlife through **Woodland Improvement Grants**. Ancient Woodland Priority Areas are being identified in the region; within these areas WIG will be available to fund 80% of costs of appropriate work. These Priority areas will be confirmed in June. Outside of these areas WIG will remain available as a 50% contribution. A further **£130,000** will be targeted to improve the condition of woodland SSSIs in private ownership at 80% of agreed costs;
- up to **£50,000** will be available to support **planning and assessment** work in woodlands to underpin better subsequent sustainable management.

The actual funds available for payment in 2007/08 will depend on the demand for woodland management and improvement grants under the transition arrangements explained below. We estimate that our existing scheme (mainly WGS) commitments for 2007/08 payments will amount to nearly **£1,525,000**.¹

Partnerships support

This year we are also highlighting the priorities for our partnership working in 2006-07.

In addition to our grant budget we will make approximately **£130,000** available for regional partnerships. Notable Partnerships, in receipt of FC support, include the following:

- Rural development: the South West Forest.
- Ancient Woodland priority areas: Exmoor National Park, Dartmoor National Park
- Woodfuel: Woodland Renaissance Partnership
- Sustainable Communities: Forest of Avon 'Key Woods' project

The Conservancy will continue to provide a range of other non-grant support to the sector such as advice, staff time, seminars and publications.

¹ Commitments are estimates at the time of publication. They vary daily because of approvals and the level of grant applications. Updated information on grant availability is provided on the FC website or by contacting the conservancy.

Table 1: Grant application deadlines and periods by EWGS grant type

GRANT TYPE²	PROSPECTUS 2005 Application deadlines (for payment in 2006/07)	PROSPECTUS 2006 Application periods^{3 4} (for payment in 2007/08)
WAG/ WPG	31 March 06	1 April 06 - 31 March 07
WRG	31 March 06	1 April 06 - 31 December 06
WIG (non-SSSI)	30 June 06	1 April 06 - 31 December 06
WIG (SSSI)	31 December 06 (but with ongoing reviews of regional budgets dependent on applications)	1 April 06 - 31 December 07 (but with ongoing reviews)
WMG	31 May 06	1 April 06 - 31 December 06
WCG	(30 September 05)	1 April 06 - 31 August 06

Details of grant offer conditions, transition arrangements and normal business rules are given in Annex 2. Regional availability of specific grants will be regularly updated on the website or you can contact one of the conservancy offices

Regional allocations may be re-deployed in the light of actual demand (applications and uptake by existing contract holders) and taking account of our national targets and priorities for support. We therefore cannot guarantee to spend all of each allocated regional grant budget.

Contact
details for
Conservancy
Woodland
Officers

- **Wiltshire:** Ian Briscoe, 01672 511767 ian.briscoe@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
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- **Dartmoor and South Hams:** Neil Mackenzie, 01626 890666, neil.mackenzie@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- **The rest of Devon (including the South West Forest) and Exmoor:** Richard Paton, 01626 890666, richard.paton@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- **Cornwall:** Mike Roe, 01626 890666, mike.roe@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

² All grant type applications with the exception of WCG will be based on a first come, first served regional basis. WCG applications will be assessed through a scoring and judging round to determine the applications capable of delivering highest public benefits.

³ We will stop making offers earlier once budget limits have been reached.

⁴ We may stop making offers earlier each year if actual claims against existing agreements are higher than expected during the current financial year and/or targets have been reached. If earlier deadlines become necessary to enforce we will try and publicise these in advance.

**Application
Timetable
and Rural
Development
Regulation
2007-2013**

For all EWGS grant types under Prospectus 2006 we will operate the application deadline dates as shown in Table 1 overleaf. In addition as part of the grants funding comes from Europe, we also need to take account of the end of the current Rural Development Regulation on 31 December 2006, which affects the nature of most EWGS contracts we can offer. At the time of publishing this Prospectus the final Rural Development Regulation (RDR) transition arrangements affecting ERDP schemes such as EWGS are not known. Deadlines may be subject to revision later in 2006 as EU rules prescribing the transition to RDR 2007-13 becomes clearer. We will aim to operate similar application arrangements to those relating to Environmental Stewardship. Revised rules and/or rates may apply to certain grant types for contracts signed after 31 December 2006 and further details will be published when these are known. The aim is to help both applicants and FC plan their respective work and ensure we can process applications and issue contracts in time so that work can take place and payments are made in the appropriate financial year.

**Rural
Development
Programme
– Public
Consultation**

Defra's public consultation on the new Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) priorities, including those relating to woodlands, is open for comments until 22 May 2006 and can be accessed online at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/rdp07_13/default.htm

In the South West the Forestry Commission is working with Natural England and other regional colleagues to produce a Regional Implementation Plan for the RDPE. This is being consulted on by partners across the region during May and June and we expect the plan to be published in time for implementation in January 2007. It will describe the region's priorities for funding under the new RDPE from 2007 – 2013. If you wish to have further information on this process please contact the main Conservancy Office.

A Regional Approach to Supporting England's Woodlands

Each region of England has its own Regional Forestry Framework outlining the opportunities for woodland management and creation in that region. To take forward the regional agenda alongside our commitment to six key national targets, which are set out in our EWGS Applicant's Pack, we are now presenting our second Prospectus for each region. We will:

- enable potential grant applicants to see how the EWGS in each region contributes to national targets;
- use EWGS to support delivery of Regional Forestry Framework action plans;
- provide continuity in the long-term sustainable management of woodland through a rate of change in our programme that is gradual and considered;
- use regional applicant feedback on our grants to inform the future development of EWGS;
- increase the range of advice and support we provide alongside Natural England.

Our allocation of grant budgets to the regions for 2007/08 continues to be based on existing agreements and historic trends and they are part of the overall national grant management strategy.

We retain a remit to deliver overarching national targets such as the England Rural Development Plan woodland creation target of 30,000 hectares by 2007.

Each Regional Prospectus represents our best forecast of grant availability but we cannot guarantee to spend all of each allocated regional grant budget. We may decide to move funds between regions in order to ensure delivery of national targets, optimise uptake of the total grants budget, and maximise overall public benefits.

Our partnerships budget is used to initiate, and buy influence in, a diverse range of national and regional partnership initiatives that help to take forward England Forestry Strategy and Regional Forestry Frameworks. In each region we aim to focus investment in market and business development, capacity building and delivery partnerships that can access new sources of funding for the woodlands and forestry sector. Our proposals for this funding are managed through our business planning process on an annual basis.

**Normal Grant
Offer Conditions**

We have to ensure that our existing commitments, as well as any new contract commitments we agree for a financial year do not exceed our budget. We will not, therefore, normally enter into new contracts for payment after 31 March in the preceding financial year. This means, for example, 31 March 2007 would be the latest approval date for a contract with a first claim year of 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. We may also stop making offers earlier each year if actual claims against existing agreements are higher than expected, or once targets and/or budget limits have been reached during the current financial year. Our plan for EWGS operation in future involves ensuring that only one Grant Prospectus is open at any time for applications.

**Transition
Arrangements
for Prospectus
2005**

For 2006 we recognise that this strategy could have consequences for some of our potential grant customers as EWGS is still a relatively new scheme and some grant components have only been available since November 2005. To help ensure continuity of work and planning we will operate an extended application period for woodland management and improvement grants under Prospectus 2005 as outlined in Table 1.

**Applications and
Contracts –
Business Rules**

Only completed applications accompanied by an acceptable map received in FC Conservancy offices by the date shown will be considered for grant contracts. EWGS contracts offered under Prospectus 2005 will have a first payment year of 2006/07. EWGS contracts offered under Prospectus 2006 will have a first payment year of 2007/08. All grant types are subject to national cash limits and are awarded on a first come-first served basis in each region. Where higher than expected claims against existing agreements (such as rescheduling of old schemes) or a shortfall in targets is identified, we may transfer funding between regions in order to respond to its national priorities. Each grant component of EWGS is subject to clear eligibility and application rules. Please speak to your local Forestry Commission contact about your proposals.