

# Detailed guide: Woodland Creation Planning Grant

Landowners, land managers and public bodies (excluding Crown bodies and non-departmental public bodies) can apply to the Forestry Commission to support large-scale, multi-purpose productive woodland creation under the Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG). This is part of the Forestry Innovation Fund, along with the [Woodland Research and Development Grant \(RDG\)](#).

You can apply for £1,000 to complete a stage 1 checklist. This is a desk-based exercise to identify constraints and opportunities for proposed planting. If there's potential for woodland creation to take place on the site then you'll be offered a stage 2 payment. At stage 2, you can get £150 per hectare to produce a woodland creation design plan, minus the £1,000 offered at stage 1. You may get additional payments for survey work.

The total amount of funding is capped at £30,000 per project.

## **Find out if you're eligible**

If you've already applied for Countryside Stewardship or the Woodland Carbon Fund, or submitted an EIA enquiry form to plant a new woodland, you're not eligible to apply for WCPG on that site.

You must plan to create woodland that is:

- 10 hectares or more, with potential to benefit the forestry sector in the long-term through production of timber or other wood products
- 10 hectares or more, with any additional blocks of at least 5 hectares

This means that if your application is for woodland less than 15 hectares in total, it must be a single woodland block. The Forestry Commission accepts applications that span multiple land holdings, though only for land in England.

You can include up to 20% of designed open space in your plan.

## **Tree species and forestry types**

At least 70% of the species in your proposed woodland must be productive, including:

- minimum general yield class (GYC) 6 – broadleaves
- GYC10 – pine

- GYC12 – other conifers

## **Biodiversity, habitats and the environment**

Existing native, semi-natural habitats are likely to have a high value for biodiversity, and for landscape and visual interest. This will need to be compared with the value of new woodland. The Forestry Commission does not support the conversion of priority habitats, such as deep peat or active raised bogs.

Where the proposed planting is on semi-natural habitat, the presumption is that the planting will be restricted to native broadleaved species or retained as open ground adding to the forest mosaic.

Find out more about [woodland species and habitats protection](#).

## **How it works**

The funding will support you to gather and analyse the information that you need to make sure your proposal takes into account:

- biodiversity
- landscape
- water
- historic environment
- local stakeholders

You'll have to develop a [UK Forestry Standard](#)-compliant plan for woodland creation that shows any constraints and opportunities.

If your land is already under an existing grant agreement then your woodland creation plan must cover the impact of tree planting on that agreement.

You'll receive payments in 2 stages and possibly extraordinary payments (see below).

### **Stage 1**

You must not start work on the stage 1 checklist until you have a signed agreement with the Forestry Commission in place.

Stage 1 is a desk-based exercise to complete a checklist identifying constraints and opportunities for the site. If the Forestry Commission decide there's potential for planting woodland on the proposed site then you'll be offered a stage 2 payment.

Compile your data using a [WCPG stage 1 checklist](#)  
(MS Word Document, 147KB)

and give supporting documents, including at least one map. You must identify

any constraints on the site.

## Stage 2

You get a stage 2 payment for producing a woodland creation design plan by completing the template provided. You will find a list of required maps and plans on the first page of the template. This includes:

- a site context map
- a site appraisal plan
- a design concept plan and final design plan

Download the

[WCPG stage 2 template](#)

(MS Word Document, 230KB)

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The Forestry Commission makes the stage 2 payment on approval of your submitted stage 2 documentation.

Note: Forestry Commission approval of your woodland creation design plan does not provide approval to plant. If you wish to plant the woodland then it will still be subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 and consultation. [Find out more about EIAs.](#)

## Extraordinary payments

If your stage 1 data indicates that a more detailed assessment is needed (such as a landscape and visual impact assessment, or an archaeological survey) then you can apply for an 'extraordinary payment'.

Complete the

[extraordinary payments application form](#)

(PDF, 137KB, 6 pages)

. You should submit this with a completed stage 1 checklist. If the stage 1 checklist indicates that there's potential for productive multi-purpose woodland at the site then you will get an offer of stage 2 funding, including any extraordinary payments where relevant.

## State aid rules

The WCPG operates under the EU state aid de minimis regulation. This means you can receive a maximum of €200,000 (~£140,000) over 3 financial years. As part of the application process, you'll need to declare the amount of de minimis aid received during the current and previous 2 financial years, and consider how a WCPG will add to this amount. [Find out more about state aid.](#)

## How to apply

You can apply year-round. The Forestry Commission aims to respond to your application within 10 working days.

You'll need the landowner's consent and signature if you don't own the land, and the Forestry Commission may ask to see your tenancy agreement to confirm your land management responsibilities.

In part 2 of the application form (below), you'll need to outline your planting proposals, and the Forestry Commission may contact you to finalise some details.

### Submit an application form

Complete the [application form](#) and return it to the grant scheme administrator: [WCPG@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:WCPG@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

If you can't apply by email, send hard copies to:

Woodland Creation Planning Grant – WCPG

Forestry Commission

National Office, England

620 Bristol Business Park

Coldharbour Lane

Bristol, BS16 1EJ

### Give consent if you appoint an agent

If you decide to appoint an agent to apply for funding on your behalf then you must [complete a form to give your consent](#).

This is not the same form that you would complete to appoint an agent to apply for Countryside Stewardship: woodland support.

## Further funding

Once you have a completed and approved woodland creation design plan, you can use this to apply for:

- [Woodland Carbon Fund](#)
- [Countryside Stewardship: woodland support](#)
- HS2 Woodland Fund

## Appeals

You can [appeal against a Forestry Commission decision](#).

## Contact the Forestry Commission (England)

Contact the Forestry Innovation Fund team for more information:

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

## Forestry Research

The research agency of the Forestry Commission offer a range of services that will [help with pest and disease control](#), and also offer resources such as [publications, statistics and datasets](#).

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## [Detailed guide: Woodland Carbon Fund](#)

Landowners, land managers and local authorities can apply to the Forestry Commission for support to plant large-scale productive woodland under the Woodland Carbon Fund (WCF). This benefits the environment through carbon storage and helps tackle the effects of climate change. It also provides opportunities to work in partnership to open up public access to woodland and increase environmental benefits.

The scheme offers capital funding for the creation of new woodland. This includes the planting of trees and costs of protection items including tree guards, fencing and gates. You can also get funding for the installation of forest roads and recreational infrastructure.

A one-off capital payment of £1,000 per hectare is available in year 5 following successful establishment.

Applicants to the Woodland Carbon Fund may still be eligible to receive funding under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) for the length of the WCF agreement, subject to meeting BPS eligibility criteria. The standard length of a WCF agreement is 5 years, however, where an agreement includes a second stage payment the agreement length extends to 10 years.

You can apply for the WCF for land under multiple ownership. You'll need the landowner's written permission if you don't own the land and the Forestry Commission may ask to see your tenancy agreement to confirm your land management responsibilities.

If you've been ordered to plant woodland as part of a planning consent you cannot apply to the WCF for grant support to fund the new planting.

## How it works

You can get stage 1 capital funding for:

- planting trees
- protection items – tree guards, fencing and gates
- forest roads for maintenance access and infrastructure that encourages public use of the woodland
- £1,000 per hectare in year 5 after you've successfully established your woodland

There are 2 different funding rates you can apply for:

- standard planting rate – this applies to most proposals (unless your land is in 'priority places') and you get 80% of the standard costs for planting and establishment capital items, capped at £6,800 per hectare
- priority places planting rate – this applies to proposals near to urban areas, which give access to the public on foot, and you get 100% of the standard costs for planting and establishment capital items, capped at £8,500 per hectare

See the

[Woodland Carbon Fund: priority places in England map](#)

(PDF, 4.06MB, 1 page)

to work out which areas in England qualify for a higher rate of funding. You can claim the higher rate if:

- 30% or more of your site falls within a priority place area in England
- you agree to provide access to the public by foot for 30 years

In addition to planting trees, you can get funding for:

- added recreational features such as footpaths – paid at 80% of actual costs (100% in priority places), capped at 10% of the total cost of your application
- forest roads and tracks that support access so you can successfully establish, maintain and harvest woodland – paid at 40% of actual costs, capped at 10% of the total cost of your application

Use the

[WCF capital items calculator](#)

(MS Excel Spreadsheet, 128KB)

to work out costs and possible funding.

## Find out if you're eligible

The land must meet the following size thresholds:

- 10 hectares or more to be planted as woodland with up to 20% open space in the final design
- either one continuous standalone block of 10 hectares or more or at least 10 hectares of new planting that expands existing woodland

The Forestry Commission may consider applications for grant support for additional blocks of woodland creation in landscape-scale projects as long as the blocks are each at least 5 hectares in area (standalone) or a total of 5 hectares if connecting or expanding existing woodland.

Find out how to develop woodland design plans and associated maps.

## Tree species

You must include productive tree species on 70% of the net planted area in your woodland design, including:

- minimum general yield class (GYC) 6 – broadleaves
- GYC10 – pine
- GYC12 – other conifers

You can find country-specific advice on which tree-species to plant in the UKFS publication. Find further information on [species and provenance choice for adapting England's woodlands](#) from Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission.

Forest Research also offers a tool to help you select species ecologically suited to your site. Find out about the [Ecological Site Classification Decision Support System \(ESC-DSS\)](#).

You can't apply for funding if you plan to:

- create short-rotation forestry
- create short-rotation coppice
- plant fast-growing tree species such as eucalypts

## Planting density

You must plant 2,000 stems per hectare minimum on a net area basis.

## Funding to develop your proposal

Before you apply to the WCF you may want to consider using the [Woodland Creation Planning Grant \(WCPG\)](#). The WCPG provides funding to prepare a UKFS-complaint Woodland Creation Design Plan – this plan can subsequently be used

to support a WCF application.

## How to apply

You can apply year round and the Forestry Commission aims to respond to your application within 3 months.

### Submit an application form

You need to [submit an application form](#) and send it to the WCF scheme administrator at the Forestry Commission.

Send an electronic copy of your completed application form to:  
[wcf@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wcf@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

Along with your application form you need to submit one of the following:

1. a completed WCPG stage 1 checklist and supporting documents including at least one map showing features of your site and any constraints – [find out more](#)
2. a draft UKFS-compliant woodland creation design plan
3. a completed UKFS-compliant woodland creation design plan
4. confirmation that Forestry Commission England has given an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening decision that the proposal does not require an EIA, or should consent be required, confirmation that the consent to plant has been awarded

If you submit your application form with either a WCPG stage 1 checklist or a draft woodland creation design plan (bullet point 1 or 2) then funding from the WCF can only be allocated in principle. This decision will be made within 3 months of the application being received. A final agreement will be issued once a completed woodland creation design plan has been prepared and the subsequent EIA process completed.

If you submit an application form with an EIA screening decision that the proposal does not require an EIA – or should consent be required, confirmation that the consent to plant has been awarded – you will receive a decision on the award of WCF funding within 3 months.

Applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of representatives from Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency, who will evaluate applications to ensure they meet the criteria of the fund.

### Give consent if you appoint an agent

If you decide to appoint an agent to apply for funding on your behalf you must [complete a form to give your consent](#).

(This is not the same form that you would complete to appoint an agent to apply for Countryside Stewardship: woodland support.)

## **Make an appeal**

Find out how to [make a complaint or appeal](#).

## **Extra income from selling carbon**

If your project is not cost-effective with the Woodland Carbon Fund grant alone, you might be able to earn further income by selling carbon credits from your project. In order to do this you need to register with the Woodland Carbon Code within 2 years from the start of planting.

Validation/verification to this standard provides assurance of the carbon savings and access to the voluntary carbon market.

Find out more in the guidance on woodland creation, including more information on the Woodland Carbon Code and an overview of how to manage woodland once it's created.

## **Contact the Forestry Commission (England)**

You can get help developing maps or completing the application form from the Forestry Commission: [wcf@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wcf@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

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## **[Detailed guide: Woodland owners: tax planning](#)**

To preserve and protect national heritage for the benefit of the public, the government introduced the 'Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme'. This offers landowners – including owners of woodland sites – conditional exemption from Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax, providing certain criteria are met.

Buildings, land (including woodland), works of art and other objects that qualify under the scheme might be exempt from Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax. These property types are called 'heritage properties' by HMRC.

## **Find out if you're eligible**

To be eligible you have to own ancient semi-natural woodlands – which are, or could be, included on the inventories of Ancient Woodland kept by Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. HMRC will consider your case for conditional exemption from capital taxes based on scientific, scenic or historic value.

If you own other woodlands on ancient woodland sites, such as new plantations, you might qualify for tax relief if your site satisfies the

criteria relating to land of outstanding scenic or historic interest.

Find further information in the HMRC publication on [capital taxation and tax-exempt heritage assets](#). Sections 5.7 and 5.8 in chapter 5 of this document explain how woodlands might qualify for tax exemptions.

## Capital Gains Tax

A growing timber crop is exempt from Capital Gains Tax (but not the land it grows on), where managed as a commercial investment. [Find out more in HMRC's capital gains manual](#).

## Income Tax

Income from the sale of timber from the ownership of commercial woodlands is exempt from both income and corporation tax. [Find out more in HMRC's business manual](#).

## Stewardship agreements and the Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme

If your land is currently under either Environmental Stewardship or Countryside Stewardship schemes with Natural England, your grants may be affected by the Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme.

Find out more about:

- [Environmental Stewardship for heritage properties](#) – how Environmental Stewardship grants apply to land that is exempt from Inheritance Tax as a heritage property
- [Countryside Stewardship for heritage properties](#) – your options and which capital items are available on land exempt from Inheritance Tax as a heritage property

Find more information on:

- [Inheritance Tax](#)
  - [Capital Gains Tax](#)
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# [Detailed guide: Cross-compliance for woodland owners and managers](#)

For clarification by the Forestry Commission on cross-compliance and how it affects you as a woodland owner or manager, read [Cross-compliance requirements for forests/woodland: operations note 38](#). This gives you information on:

- cross-compliance in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) programme 2014 to 2020 for woodland (forest)
- the two separate sets of standards – specific requirements relating to European Regulations, known as ‘Statutory Management Requirements’ (SMRs) and standards for ‘Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition’ (GAEC) of land
- when and how you need to comply with cross-compliance rules
- which woodland schemes and payments are affected
- breaches and sanctions
- exemptions and derogations

Read broader guidance for farmers and landowners on how you must [follow cross-compliance rules](#) from 1 January 2018 if you claim for the [Basic Payment Scheme \(BPS\)](#), a Countryside Stewardship scheme or the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS).

Find out more about about [Countryside Stewardship and woodland support](#).

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# [Detailed guide: The Woodland Carbon Code scheme for buyers and landowners](#)

## **Background**

The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) is the UK’s voluntary carbon standard for woodland creation projects. It provides reassurance about the carbon savings that woodland projects may realistically achieve. This government-led scheme provides:

- a high quality, robust voluntary carbon standard
- a transparent UK Woodland Carbon Registry
- robust science to predict and monitor carbon sequestration
- independent validation and verification of projects

This means that:

- carbon buyers have reassurance that they have invested in a responsible scheme and can see the benefits that will be provided
- project developers have recognised procedures and standards to work to, both in terms of woodland management and carbon accounting

## Information if you're buying carbon

Woodland Carbon Units from verified WCC projects can help a company compensate for their unavoidable emissions. Projects provide a whole host of benefits for water, biodiversity, communities and the economy as well as sequestering carbon.

Read [WCC guidance](#) on:

- what are Woodland Carbon Units
- why buy WCC-verified carbon units
- where to buy WCC-verified carbon units
- what other companies say

See the [UK Government's Environmental Reporting Guidelines](#), which set out how a company should report their greenhouse gas emissions, and the pamphlet, [Woodland carbon units: buyer's guide](#).

(PDF, 1.89MB, 2 pages)

## Case studies

See [examples of buyers who have purchased Woodland Carbon Units](#).

## Information if you're a landowner

The WCC is the UK's voluntary carbon standard for woodland creation projects. If you demonstrate that you meet this standard, you can sell the carbon sequestered in your woodland in the form of Woodland Carbon Units.

See the pamphlet, [Woodland landowner's guide to the WCC](#).

(PDF, 225KB, 2 pages)

See [the steps involved if you are a landowner with a woodland creation project](#), including how to:

- find a project developer
- register your project
- get validated (have your project checked at the outset)
- stay verified (have your project checked to show progress)

## The WCC and other grant and funding schemes

If you apply for registration with the WCC you are not excluded from applying

for Forestry Commission grant and funding schemes:

Find out about your eligibility for:

- [Woodland Carbon Fund](#)
- [Countryside Stewardship: woodland support](#)
- [Woodland Creation Planning Grants](#)
- [Woodland Research and Development Grant](#)
- HS2 Woodland Fund

## Case studies

See [examples of WCC projects](#).

## The UK Woodland Carbon Registry

The [UK Woodland Carbon Registry](#) holds details of WCC projects, and tracks the issuance, ownership and use of carbon credits. You can use it to look up a project or to see who has purchased carbon units from WCC projects.

## Woodland Carbon Code contact details

Email enquiries: [climatechange@forestry.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@forestry.gov.uk)

Find [regional contact details for the WCC team](#), nationally and regionally.