

Forestry Commission

The FC provides grants for both encouraging the planting of new woodlands, and the management of existing woods through the Woodland Grant Scheme. The England Forestry Strategy, launched in December 1998, stated the Government's intention to refocus Woodland Grant Scheme expenditure to achieve the priorities set out in the Strategy.

Establishing New Woodlands

The new discretionary grants for new woodlands in England are part of this refocusing. These have enabled the FC to adopt a discretionary approach to approving applications and achieve greater control of Woodland Grant Scheme expenditure. This means that only applications that best meet the England Forestry Strategy are approved. In essence the changes are:

- The area of woodland must be over 0.25ha and be at least 15m wide.
- There are now windows of application for new planting grants. For 2001 the closing dates are May 31st and October 31st.
- Applications are scored against specified criteria. Threshold scores are announced shortly after the closing dates for applications, and only those equal to or better than the threshold will be offered grant aid.
- Generally points are awarded for planting trees that are locally native; extending areas of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland; incorporating

permissive public access; and by entering a Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (farmers only).

- Once a contract is entered into, the new trees must be maintained for a period of 10 years.



Existing Woodlands

Woodland Improvement Grants are available for capital grants to initiate new management in the woodland. An annual Management Grant, paid at £35/ha/yr for a five year period, is available as a contribution to agreed management costs for ongoing management. All grant will be targeted at specific operations to improve/manage the woodland for either/or:

- Public access: Grant will normally be paid for provision of free public access where there is reasonable demand for such access. We would expect the paths to be maintained, signs to be

erected and possibly some form of advertising.

- Wildlife conservation: Ancient or Semi-natural woods are more likely to qualify for this category, and the operations likely to qualify for grant are ride/glade maintenance, creation of open areas around water features and coppicing. These operations should benefit the habitat of specific species, not just 'general habitat improvement'.

What Next?

If you feel that your plans for your land or woods can qualify for grant, you will need to contact the local FC office (address below) requesting a 'New Applicants Pack'. Most of the information you will require is in the pack, and if more help is needed, FC staff can assist you. If your proposal is reasonably large or complex, it would be advisable to contact an agent who has the technical knowledge to assist with the process, these can be found in this publication. Once the completed application arrives at the FC office, the local Woodland Officer will contact you to arrange a meeting and site visit. If new planting, coppicing or felling is involved in the application, we will consult with the appropriate statutory bodies prior to offering a contract. This will involve the application appearing on a public register.

Contact:

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