



Forestry Challenge Scheme Information Booklet 2014

Afforestation & Plant Health Branch

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Summary

The Forestry Challenge Scheme (FCS) aims to encourage planting of larger woodlands by inviting bids from landowners to plant single woodlands of at least 5 hectares. This booklet provides guidance on preparing and submitting your application to the FCS.

Applications will be assessed to select projects that comply with Forestry Grant Scheme rules and FCS criteria. Projects that deliver well designed woodland above the minimum 5 hectares will be given preference.

Successful candidates will be expected to sign an agreement by 31 December 2014 and claims for the first instalment of grant must be submitted by 1 May 2015.

The information contained in this booklet and the Forestry Grant Schemes Information booklet is not exhaustive and should only be taken as a guide.

You must not start any work until we have approved your application.

Forestry Challenge Scheme Requirements

- Your application must be for a single woodland of a minimum of 5 hectares
- Your application must meet the UK Forestry Standard and associated Guidelines
- Fully completed applications must be received by Afforestation & Plant Health Branch (see Appendix A for the full postal address) by 3:00pm on 10 October 2014
- If your application is successful, you will be asked to sign the terms and conditions of an agreement
- You must maintain the woodland for a minimum of 20 years for conifer and 30 years for broadleaf
- You must submit your claim for first instalment of grant by 1 May 2015
- Funding will be up to 70% of eligible costs over a 5 year establishment period

Part 1

General Information

1. Introduction

This booklet is a supplement to the Forestry Grant Schemes Information booklet. The Forestry Challenge Scheme (FCS) is part of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (2007- 2013) and is administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The FCS is open for applications from 2 July to 10 October 2014.

2. What is the Forestry Challenge Scheme?

- The FCS is an open competition inviting bids to plant single woodlands of at least 5 hectares
- Applications will be judged on value for money and against the assessment criteria set out in this booklet

3. Aims of the Forestry Challenge Scheme

- To increase the amount of woodland
- To encourage farmers and landowners to establish new woodland based on landscape scale considerations, with associated economic, environmental and social benefits
- To maximise public benefit by supporting projects on a best value basis
- To assess the interest of farmers and landowners in planting larger woodlands
- To provide realistic costs associated with planting larger woodlands

4. Grant Support

- Support will not be based on standard payment rates
- Support will be set at a maximum of 70% of the eligible costs provided in your Business Plan and must be verified by invoices and bank statements.
- You will be entitled to apply for the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
- Entitlement to Single Farm Payment is unaffected. However, you will need to declare the change of land use.
- Dual funding is prohibited under EC Regulations
- All payments will comply with the current EC requirements

5. The Forestry Challenge Scheme Agreement

You must:

- sign the terms and conditions of an agreement
- maintain the woodland for a minimum period of 20 years for conifer and 30 years for broadleaf
- submit claims for establishment in accordance with the FCS rules
- comply with Forestry Grant Scheme rules

Part 2 How to Apply

6. Application Forms

You must fully complete the:

- Forestry Grant Schemes Application Form (PG1)
- Supplementary Application Form (FCS1)
- Costs Spreadsheet (FCS2)
- Controls to Avoid damage to Protected Areas, Scheduled Monuments & environmental features form (FCS3)
- Complete the management prescription (FCS4)

7. Timing

- Fully completed applications must be received by Afforestation & Plant Health Branch by 10 October 2014 (see Appendix A for the full postal address).
- All applications will be acknowledged on receipt.

Part 3

Assessment of your Application

8. Essential Assessment Criteria

FCS applications must fulfil the following criteria:

- Eligible applicants must have a substantial estate or interest in the land. This includes tenants as well as outright owners, provided that all the parties concerned are named in the application and have signed the application forms. Public bodies are also eligible.
- Single woodlands of at least 5 hectares is the minimum area to be planted.
- You must have a DARD Business ID to apply for the FCS. If you do not have a Business ID, you can apply to DARD to get one. Please complete the FB1 form (available on the DARD website at www.dardni.gov.uk/dard-ids) and take it to any DARD Direct Office. There is a list of DARD Direct offices at the end of the FB1 form.
- You must provide all the information required in the Forestry Grant Schemes Application Form (PG1), Supplementary Application Form (FCS1), Controls to Avoid Damage to Protected Areas, Scheduled Monuments & Environmental Features Form (FCS3), Costs Spreadsheet (FCS2) and Management Prescription (FCS4).
- If there are power lines on your proposed site, you must inform NIE of your plans in writing and enclose a copy of your letter or email with your application.
- Applicants must provide a map of at least 1:10,000 scale, clearly showing the boundaries of the proposed woodland.

If you do not meet these criteria, your application will not be accepted.

9. Desirable Assessment Criteria

A judging panel will examine your application to assess the extent to which your project meets the desirable criteria.

Projects that deliver a well designed woodland above the minimum 5 hectares will be given preference.

- **Management Prescription**

Describe how your proposal demonstrates that the management plan has considered: site preparation, fencing, species selection, planting layout, planting density, protection, access, maintenance and project management, including monitoring, over 5 years. You will need to include a design map at a scale of 1:10,000 or greater.

- **Landscape and Design Considerations**

Describe how your proposal demonstrates good design in relation to neighbouring dwellings, the surrounding landscape and will contribute to and enhance connectivity between adjoining woodland and other habitats.

- **Community Benefits**

Describe how your proposal demonstrates a need for additional woodland based recreation/education, how you will provide access (public/restricted/specialist), the nature and type of any proposed facilities and plans to engage community support.

- **Biodiversity Benefits**

Describe how your proposal demonstrates creation of priority woodland habitat, species diversity, maintains or improves the water environment and provides connectivity between existing woodland habitats.

- **Climate Change and Tree Pests**

Describe how your project will contribute to climate change mitigation (e.g. an objective assessment of carbon sequestration) and that risks posed by pests and diseases have been addressed.

- **Integration with Existing Business**

Describe how your project will augment your existing business (e.g. reducing diffuse pollution from agricultural sources, restoring the condition of riparian and aquatic habitats, improving livestock production with shelter and biosecurity, reducing heating costs, reducing land management costs)

What to do next

1. Carefully read the information in this guide and the application forms (available from the our website or Afforestation & Plant Health Branch) to decide if the Forestry Challenge Scheme is right for you.
2. Check that you and your land are eligible and that you can meet the FCS conditions.
3. Check that your application will not conflict with any other grant scheme in which you are or will be participating.
4. Complete application forms PG1, FCS1, FCS2, FCS3 and FCS4.
5. Send your completed PG1, FCS1, FCS2 and FCS4 to:

Afforestation & Plant Health Branch
Forest Service
Room 5B
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3SB

6. Send your completed FCS3 to:

Environmental Regulation Branch
Forest Service
Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin Industrial Estate
Enniskillen
Co. Fermanagh
BT74 4EJ

Your application must arrive no later than 3:00pm on 10 October 2014

Appendix A

Contacts

Please send your application for the Forestry Challenge Scheme (forms PG1, FCS1 , FCS2 and FCS4) to:

Afforestation & Plant Health Branch
Forest Service
Room 5B
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3SB

Tel: 028 9052 4870

Email: grants.forests@ardni.gov.uk

For more information on forestry grants, please see the DARD website at www.ardni.gov.uk/index/grants-and-funding/forestry-grants.htm

For further information on the Forestry Challenge Scheme, please contact:

Nigel Sweeney
Grants Manager
Forest Service
Room 5B
Dundonald House
Belfast
Ballymiscaw
BT4 3SB

Tel: 028 9037 8502

Email: nigel.sweeney@ardni.gov.uk

Please send your completed FCS3 form to:

Environmental Regulation Branch
Forest Service
Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin Industrial Estate
Enniskillen
Co. Fermanagh
BT74 4EJ

Tel: 028 6634 3124

Email: john.griffin@ardni.gov.uk