

Rural Development Programme 2014-2020



Forestry Grant Schemes Information Booklet 2016/2017

Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020

Forestry Grant Schemes Information Booklet

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1. Introduction

The Forestry Grant Schemes outlined in this booklet are administered by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs and offered through the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Forest Policy

The Northern Ireland Forestry Strategy (DARD 2006) re-stated forest policy as:

- A steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide; and
- The sustainable management of existing woods and forests.

The [Forestry Act 2010](#) gave the Department modern powers to implement the policy. The Explanatory Notes to the Act explain that modern forestry has developed from policies intended to create a strategic reserve of timber and to maintain a timber supply to something that is *“a complex and multi-functional enterprise, with increasing economic, social and environmental purposes and benefits”*, in which *“the modern Forest Service must balance these diverse and sometimes competing functions in an integrated and balanced way, and strive to maximise the benefit of the public estate”*. The Act placed a general duty on the Department to promote forestry, so that the traditional role of developing afforestation, the supply of timber, and the maintenance of growing trees which was the emphasis of the 1953 Act was extended to include protection of the environment, biodiversity, climate change and social and recreational use. The Rural Development Programme Forestry Grant Schemes provides funding for the delivery of the Forest Strategy in the private sector.

The delivery of forest policy is underpinned by the [UK Forestry Standard](#) (UKFS) which describes the Governments' approach to sustainable

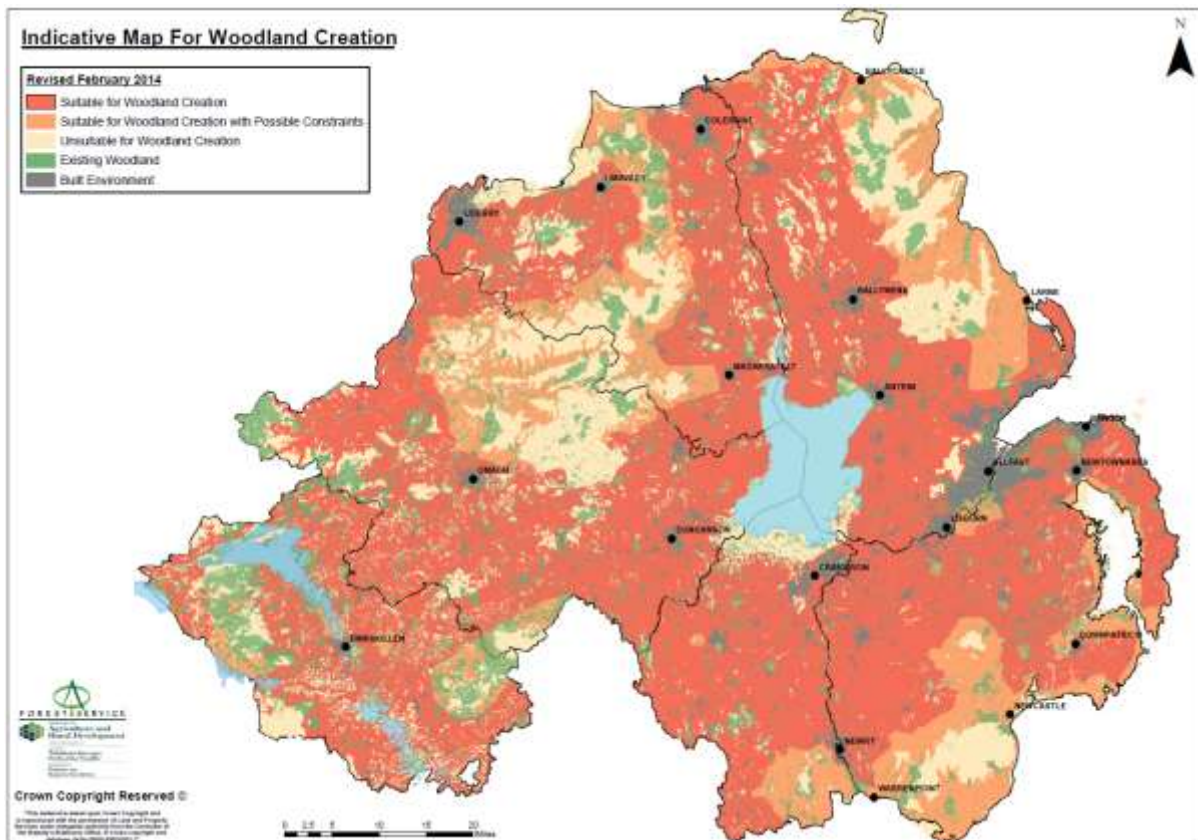
forest management. Therefore all forestry work undertaken through any of the Forestry Grant Schemes and the subsequent management of grant aided woodlands must meet the requirements of the UKFS and its supporting guidelines.

Rural Development Programme – Forestry Grant Schemes

Support for woodland expansion and the management of existing woodland under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) Forestry Grant Schemes is designed to provide both woodland owners and the general public with a wide range benefits obtained from ecosystems. These services include: social/health benefits related to public access to forests, particularly those close to settlements; environmental benefits such as carbon capture (sequestration), protection and conservation of biodiversity and improved water quality; and, economic benefits such as timber/wood production and tourism businesses. Sufficient funding has been allocated under the RDP to create up to 1,800 hectares of new woodland and sustain approximately 4,000 hectares of woodland created under previous programmes. This will make a small but positive contribution towards the aim of the Forestry Strategy to achieve 12% woodland area by the middle of this century.

Woodland creation will take place on both agricultural and non-agricultural land, subject to environmental safeguards and taking into account the social, environmental and economic benefits of new woodland. Since farmers are the largest agricultural land-owning group, they are in a unique position to lead woodland creation. However it will also be possible to support afforestation of land owned by public authorities and non farming landowners.

Forest Service has published an indicative map of land suitable for woodland creation. The map is available on the Forest Service website and is reproduced below <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/indicative-map-woodland-creation>



2. Legal basis

The national legal basis for the Forestry Grant Schemes is the Forestry Act 2010 section 2¹. The Schemes operate in accordance with the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and are regulated by Commission Regulation (EU) No.1305/2013, Articles 21, 22, 24-26 and under Measure 8. This programme is part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The Forestry Grant Schemes have been notified to the European Commission under Commission Regulation (EU) No. 702/2014 declaring certain categories of aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

Articles 32, 34, 35 of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 702/2014 will be utilised by the Forestry Grant Schemes and are granted subject to assessment against the detailed conditions of the Regulation and will not exceed the €7.5 million limit per investment project.

Specific State Aid requirements for each scheme are specified in the State Aid section at the back of this Information Booklet.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2010/10/section/2/enacted>

3. How to Apply

To apply under the Forestry Grant Schemes, applicants must complete an application form which can be obtained from Grants and Regulations Branch (see Annex 1 for contact details) or downloaded from the [Forestry Grants Section of the DAERA website](#)

Before completing an application form you should familiarise yourself with this Information Booklet and any Supplementary Scheme Information Booklet. You should fill in the application form together with any supplementary documentation, giving all the necessary information requested, and forward it to Grants and Regulations Branch before any specified scheme specific deadline.

You must **not** start any operations until you receive a letter of offer and confirmation that we have received your completed terms and conditions.

An application may be made by the owner (or owners) of the land or by a tenant, provided that all the parties concerned are specified and named in the application, and have signed the declaration. All applications require a DAERA Business ID Number. If you do not have a DAERA Business ID Number you can apply for one by contacting your local DERA Direct office.

A Woodland Creation Plan or a Forest Management Plan must accompany your application. These plans state the objectives of management together with details of forestry proposals over the next 5 years and outlines intentions over a minimum total period of 10 years. Forest Management Plans allow managers to demonstrate relevant

elements of sustainable forest management for existing woodlands. In contrast, a Woodland Creation Plan is a plan to cover areas where new woodlands are proposed. Woodland Creation Plan and Forest Management Plan templates are available to download from the [Forestry Grants Section of the DAERA website](#)

4. Grant Schemes

4a. Forest Expansion Scheme

Introduction

This scheme encourages the creation of new forests blocks of at least 5 hectares and larger (the definition of a forest block is provided at annex). The main benefits delivered under the scheme are: provide access, increase carbon capture (sequestration), produce timber, improve biodiversity and water quality and enhance the landscape.

Eligibility

Grants are available for land owners, including:

- Farmers
- Landowners and estate owners
- Charitable organisations
- Local Councils (Establishment Grant Only)

Government bodies and agencies are not eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Schemes. The holder (manager) of land owned by Government departments and agencies can apply for an Establishment grant provided the manager is constituted as a private body, charitable organisation or Council.

Aims of the Scheme

The main aim of the Forest Expansion Scheme is to encourage applicants to establish new woodland at a landscape scale, with associated environmental, economic and social benefits. Support is provided for afforestation of both agricultural and non-agricultural land.

Support will be provided for:

- Costs of establishment including the costs of plants and planting and other costs such as ground preparation, protection and maintenance (between years 1-5) of the newly planted woodland.
- Payments for income foregone to cover loss of income compared to agricultural production for a maximum period of ten years.

The application for grant aid must describe the long-term objectives for the woodland and the work proposed in the next 5 years to meet these objectives. If you intend to plant more than one block you must submit a single application where the blocks are located close to each other. Your bid for establishment costs should be shown separately for each block.

The Forest Expansion Scheme is not available for:

- Planting in existing woodlands (including grazed woodland)
- Christmas tree growing
- Short rotation coppice
- Fast-growing trees planted for energy production (such as short-rotation forestry)

Forest Expansion Scheme - Establishment Grant

Forest Expansion Scheme - Establishment Grants are paid for the creation of woodland on an area of land which is not already wooded.

Eligible costs include;

- Management (Implementation and Monitoring)
- Site preparation
- Fencing
- Plant supply
- Tree guard supply
- Planting cost
- Weeding
- Formative shaping (broadleaves)

Support payments are determined using a competitive bidding mechanism (referred to as a challenge fund mechanism) whereby applicants are assessed by judging which proposals contribute most to delivering the aims of the Forest Expansion Scheme at minimum cost i.e. those projects offering best value for money will be prioritised and selected for funding . The Forest Expansion Scheme application form will detail criteria which are subject to change at each application tranche depending on the needs at the time.

Woodland Creation Plan

All applications for the Forest Expansion Scheme must be accompanied by a Woodland Creation Plan which will detail:

- The objectives of the woodland owner.
- A map of the proposed planting area, at a scale not less than 1:10,000 and clearly showing:
 - Site location
 - The proposed woodland boundary
 - Hazards and constraints
 - Design and landscape features
 - Access
 - Planting layout including open space
 - The map must also include a scale and legend
- A detailed planting plan describing ground preparation, species selection (with percentages of each species by woodland or woodland block area), integral open space (with percentage of open space by woodland or woodland block area), planting density and tree protection.
- Details of planned maintenance for the payment period.
- An indication of proposed management once established.

Species Diversity Requirements

To meet Commission Regulation (EU) 807/2014 and the UK Forestry Standard, each new block of proposed afforestation must have the following proportions by woodland block area –

- A minimum of 3 tree species with each species component comprising 10% or more of the area
- 10% broadleaved trees or shrubs of which at least 5% must be nativeUp to a maximum of 20% open space.

In blocks of 10ha or more you must also demonstrate

- at least 10% open space
- a minimum **additional** 10% managed for environmental objectives either established with species other than the 3 tree species above or as open space

Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia

When agricultural land is converted to woodland, annual payments are available for 10 years to compensate eligible land owners for agricultural income forgone.

To be accepted into the Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia you must be running an agricultural business. The land to be planted must be agricultural land for the last three years and must meet all relevant requirements of the UKFS. If you do not qualify for the Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia you may still apply for Forest Expansion Scheme – Establishment Grant.

The Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia is open to those who, either personally or through a manager, run an agricultural business that includes the land to be converted to woodland. An agricultural business means a business or part of a business consisting in the pursuit of agricultural activities. For these purposes, “agricultural activity” means (i) production, rearing or growing of agricultural products, including harvesting, milking, breeding animals, and keeping animals for farming purposes, (ii) maintaining an agricultural area in a state which makes it suitable for grazing or cultivation without preparatory action going beyond usual agricultural methods and machineries.²

Qualifying land must have been in agricultural use for at least 3 years before your application to join the scheme. We may cross-check your application against Integrated Administrative and Control System (IACS) records. “Agricultural use” in this context means the activities described above. For the purposes of payment, there are two types of agricultural land:

² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-land-eligibility-2016>

Arable land is used to grow crops. These crops include cereals, grain legumes or pulses, oil seeds or forage maize.

Improved land includes recently managed improved grassland and arable land. Improved is defined as grassland where over 50% of the sward consists of either single or in mixture, ryegrass, timothy or white clover [or other sown grass species indicative of cultivation]. Grassland within Disadvantaged (DA) or Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA) not qualifying under this definition of improved land may still be eligible if it has been “improved” by management practices such as liming and top dressing and that this improvement has been maintained.

Unimproved land is agricultural land that does not meet the definition for Improved land but which has been used for agriculture (as defined earlier) for at least three years prior to the application. Areas where there is a significant presence of sensitive plant species indicative of native unimproved grassland will be ineligible.

Exclusions from Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia

The following types of land are excluded:

- Non-agricultural land, including that used primarily to graze horses not used for agricultural purposes
- Land forming part of a National Nature Reserve
- Common land
- Land at a time when it is rented out to another person for their exclusive occupation
- Land where the establishment of woodlands would conflict with or duplicate any previous funding by a public body

You should check that there are no legal or contractual obligations that prevent the planting or long-term management of trees on your land e.g. Environmentally Sensitive Areas. There may also be obligations under other schemes that may affect the eligibility of your land for tree planting.

Use of the Land receiving Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia

Once planted, the land may not be used for any agricultural purpose. You may obtain a non-agricultural income from the land in addition to any forestry income available provided this use is consistent with the aims of the Forest Expansion Scheme. Annual payments will be made for 10 years and the annual payment rates for the Forest Expansion Scheme-Annual Premia are shown below;

Figure 1 - Annual Premia Payment rates

Land Type	Land Category	
	Arable / Improved (£/hectare/year)	Unimproved (£/hectare/year)
Lowland (LL)	425	115
Less Favoured Areas - Disadvantaged Areas (DA)	380	115
Less Favoured Areas - Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDA)	280	75

Period of Commitment and withdrawing from the Forest Expansion Scheme

The Forest Expansion Scheme is paid as part of an agreement under which the woodland owner undertakes to maintain the woodland in accordance with good forestry practice and must not fell the woodland for a minimum of 20 years following the first annual payment. However the woodland owner will be allowed to thin the woodland in accordance with normal silvicultural practice and remove nurse trees.

If the woodland owner wishes to withdraw from this scheme and does not wish to transfer the agreement to a new occupier we may recover establishment grant payments already made with interest. We will not normally recover payments if the woodland continues in existence or if the original agreement holder has died or if there are other exceptional circumstances.

4b. Forest Protection Scheme

Introduction

This scheme provides support for the prevention of pest and disease outbreaks and for restoration of forests following pest and disease outbreaks. We will continue to work closely with colleagues in GB and Ireland to ensure the best possible protection to the UK as a whole, while recognising the importance of close collaboration with the Republic of Ireland to strengthen biosecurity for the whole island.

Eligibility

Grants are available for forest owners, including:

- Farmers
- Landowners and estate owners
- Charitable organisations
- Local Councils

Government bodies and agencies are not eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Schemes. The holder (manager) of land owned by Government departments and agencies can apply for the Forest Protection Scheme provided the manager is constituted as a private body, charitable organisation or Council.

The minimum area of woodland that is eligible for the Forest Protection Scheme is 0.2 hectares irrespective of whether the area has been established with grant-aid

Activities to prevent the spread of non-endemic insect pests and diseases

Criteria

Support relating to restoration will be limited to those cases where at least 20% of the relevant forest potential has been destroyed, this being defined as the loss or imminent loss (both of which have to be confirmed by the relevant plant health authority) of any tree species or combination of tree species that comprise at least 20% of the affected area determined by Forest Service. All operational work to deal with priority pests and pathogens will be required to comply with the UK Forestry Standard, relevant environmental legislation and biosecurity measures as stipulated by the plant health authority.

All applications seeking support under the Rural Development Programme shall have a Forest Management Plan that provides justification for the support. Management plans may be prepared specifically to support applications for grant aid or may be pre-existing. All plans must be in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Forest Management as defined by the UK Forestry Standard and shall be valid for a period of five years or more. As a minimum, the plan must cover the area for which grant aid is being sought.

Support is available for the supply and planting of replacement plants, in the case of damage caused by *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* the fungal

pathogen which causes ash die-back disease or Phytophthora ramorum support will be given for alternative non-susceptible tree species.

Eligibility conditions and selection criteria will consider the European Commission's document on 'Guidelines on Eligibility Conditions and Selection Criteria'. As a first step, projects will be required to meet all the 'eligibility criteria' and as a second step projects will be ranked using selection criteria. Failure to demonstrate eligibility will mean the application for support is rejected. The selection process will be competitive. If funding is limited i.e. more applications than funding available at any time we will prioritise to select projects that contribute most to the scheme objectives. In this event, Forest Service will publish the scoring criteria and applications will be appraised against one another to ensure those with highest value added will be selected for support.

Applicable Amount and Support Rates

This option is discretionary and support will be provided based on an appropriate appraisal submitted on a Forest Management Plan for a minimum 5 year period. Approved work will be paid at 100% of approved eligible costs with individual projects limited to £10,000 per application.

The following costs are eligible for restoration actions:

- The supply of seedlings of alternative species, their establishment and protection.
- Standard costs are used for restoration and will be made using a cost model of £1,585 per hectare for replanting and paid in pounds sterling (Equivalent to €1,932 per hectare at an exchange rate of one euro = £0.82 sterling).

- Grant is only paid based on claims verified by submission of original invoices, a copy of cheque(s) / BACS payment printout(s) and bank statements proving payment to your suppliers

Species Diversity Requirements

Each new block of proposed afforestation must have the following proportions by block area –

- A minimum of 3 tree species with each species component comprising 10% or more of the area
- 10% broadleaved trees or shrubs of which at least 5% must be native
- Up to a maximum of 20% open space.

In blocks of 10ha or more you must also demonstrate

- at least 10% open space
- a minimum **additional** 10% managed for environmental objectives either established with species other than the 3 tree species above or as open space

Period of Commitment and withdrawing from the Forest Protection Scheme

The Forest Protection Scheme is paid as part of an agreement under which the woodland owner undertakes to maintain their woodland in accordance with good forestry practice and must not fell the woodland for a minimum of 20 years following payment unless you have obtained prior approval from the Department. However the woodland owner will

be allowed to thin the woodland in accordance with normal silvicultural practice and remove nurse trees.

We will not normally recover payments if the woodland continues in existence or if the original agreement holder has died or if there are other exceptional circumstances. However, if the woodland owner wishes to withdraw from this scheme and does not wish to transfer the agreement to a new occupier we may recover grant payments for restoration actions already made.

4c. Woodland Investment Grant

Introduction

This grant supports sustainable forest management including the improvement of the environmental value of woodlands.

Eligibility

Grants are available for forest owners, including:

- Farmers
- Landowners and estate owners
- Charitable organisations
- Local Councils

Government bodies and agencies are not eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Schemes. The holder (manager) of land owned by Government departments and agencies can apply for the Woodland Investment Grant provided the manager is constituted as a private body, charitable organisation or Council.

Support may be made available for:

- Restructuring woodland - to improve the ecological and environmental value of woodlands through the regeneration of forests by replanting. The aim is to encourage species diversity and improve the resilience of forests to climate change;
- Support for removing non-native and/or invasive species such as laurel and rhododendron as a one-off intervention.

Eligible costs may include:

- The direct costs associated with the implementation of the investments, this will include materials, services and labour.
- Support will be for the costs of labour and materials (where relevant) for a range of forestry operations such as costs for plants and planting, tree protection by fencing and tree shelters, and the removal of non-native species such as rhododendron and laurel.

Criteria

All proposals must comply with the minimum environmental requirements of the UK Forestry Standard.

Support for woodland habitats and species, non- woodland habitats, restructuring regeneration, investments in public amenity will be conditional on providing a Forest Management Plan.

Forest Management Plans may be prepared specifically to support applications for grant aid or may be pre-existing³. All plans must be in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Forest Management as defined by the UK Forestry Standard and shall be valid for a period of five years or more. As a minimum, the Forest Management Plan must cover the area for which grant aid is being sought

As a first step, projects will be required to meet all the 'eligibility criteria' and as a second step, if funding is limited i.e more applications than funding available at any time we will prioritise to select projects that contribute most to the scheme objectives. In this event, Forest Service will publish the scoring criteria and applications will be appraised against

³ For example, a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) certified woodland will already have a management plan.

one another to ensure those with highest value added will be selected for support.

Restocking Option

The Restocking Option supports restructuring to improve the ecological and environmental value of woodlands through the re-establishment of forests by replanting. The aim is to encourage species diversity and improve the resilience of forests to climate change. All applications must demonstrate how the redesign improves the ecological and environmental value of the woodland and must be accompanied by a Forest Management Plan.

Support will be provided at a rate of £600 per hectare, the minimum application area to be replanted is 1 hectare and the minimum block area must be 0.2 hectares and the block have a minimum average width of 20m. Proposals must result in the area replanted having a species composition that meets or exceeds the minimum specifications below:

Species Diversity Requirements

Each application must provide evidence of meeting the following proportions by block area or following the preparation of a Forest Management Plan, the proportions may be based on the area covered by the Plan –

- No more than 75% allocated to a single species
- Up to a maximum of 20% open space

To comply with the UK Forestry Standard blocks of 10 hectares and more must have at least

- 10% open space
- 10% other species or ground managed for environmental objectives.
- 5% native broadleaved trees or shrubs

(the proportions above may be relaxed for blocks less than 10 hectares and in native woodlands providing the adjacent land uses provide landscape and habitat diversity).

Controlling Invasive Exotic Species option

Controlling Invasive Exotic Species option supports removal of non-native and/or invasive species such as laurel and rhododendron as a one-off intervention.

This option is discretionary and support will be provided based on an appropriate appraisal submitted on a Forest Management Plan for a minimum 5 year period. Approved work will be paid at 100% of approved eligible costs with individual projects limited to £10,000 per application. Grant is only paid based on competitively tendered and approved costs which are verified by submission of original invoices, a copy of cheque(s)/BACS payment printout(s) and bank statements proving payment to your suppliers.

We require competitive quotes to meet these criteria:

- quotes are addressed to you, the applicant
- quotes are in written / printed form and clearly originated from a reputable supplier who can deliver the items or work
- the supplier's contact / business details are clear and legitimate – on business headed notepaper

- the quote is based on the same specifications as described in the application
- there are no missing elements
- there are no ineligible elements
- cost calculations are up to date, correct and precise
- suppliers should confirm for how long the quote is valid
- whether the price includes the appropriate VAT rate

The minimum area of woodland covered by your Forest Management Plan under this option must be 1 hectare and the woodland must be a minimum average width of 20m. However, the treatment area where control of exotic species is actually required may be less than 1 hectare.

Period of Commitment and withdrawing from the Woodland Investment Grant

The Woodland Investment Grant is paid as part of an agreement under which the woodland owner undertakes to maintain the area as woodland in accordance with good forestry practice for a minimum period of 20 years from the time the grant has been paid.

If the woodland owner wishes to withdraw from this scheme and does not wish to transfer the agreement to a new occupier we may recover grant payments already made with interest. We will not normally recover payments if the woodland continues in existence or if the original agreement holder has died or if there are other exceptional circumstances.

5. Claiming Grant Support

Submitting Your Claim

You must provide evidence of expenditure to support your claim for the following Forestry Grant Schemes: Forest Expansion Scheme – establishment grant, Forest Protection Scheme and the Woodland Investment Grant. Your supporting documents will contain adequate detail to describe the operation(s) which support is being claimed for and must not be redacted.

With each Forestry Grant Scheme Claim Form you submit, you need to supply fully receipted and original hard-copy invoices. Each receipted invoice should show the following details:

- Supplier's name and address, and VAT registration number if appropriate
- Claimant's name and address, which should be the business name in the approved contract who is the scheme beneficiary
- Detailed description of services provided or goods supplied, separately costed.
- Date on which the services or goods were supplied
- Total amount due for payment by the customer with the VAT element clearly detailed amount paid with details of any discount awarded which fully explains the difference between the amount due and the amount paid
- Date paid
- Method of payment used
- Business stamp or signature of person receiving payment on behalf of the supplier

In addition, when you submit a fully receipted original invoice you must also back it up with evidence that you, the beneficiary, have incurred the costs and paid the suppliers / contractors. You must include:

- A copy of cheque(s) / copies of the electronic transaction between businesses and
- Original Bank statements proving payment to your suppliers.

Claims for the Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia will be made using the DAERA Single Application Form (SAF) and must be submitted in line with SAF requirements.

Late applications

An application will be considered 'late' if it is received by the Department after the specified closing date. The EU Regulations allow for us to consider cases of *force majeure*⁴ or exceptional circumstances as a reason for not submitting or amending your application on time.

Inspections

As part of our claims administration processes, Forest Service Inspectors will inspect a proportion of sites claimed for a Forestry Grant Scheme as required by European Union regulation.

Inspections are based on a combination of:

- Random selection
- Risk selection to ensure we inspect the more complex or high value costs

⁴ *Force majeure* is defined in section 9

- Targeted selection to ensure we carry out inspections on all the grants we offer

Forestry Grant Scheme inspections can take place at any time of year once your forestry claim has been submitted.

Inspections of claims for the Forest Expansion Scheme - Establishment Grant, the Forest Protection Scheme and the Woodland Investment Grant will include an assessment of stocking density and will result in either a recommendation for payment to be made or feedback to you about what remedial work is required, and when it is required to be completed to meet the minimum standards. False or misleading claims will be subject to a Penalty System which may result in reductions and exclusions being applied to your claim.

Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia claims must be submitted on your Single Application Form (SAF) during the March to May window advertised by the Department. These annual claims will be inspected between July and September. Annual Inspections are carried out on site to check that the work has been carried out and managed in accordance with what you agreed to do and against what you claimed on your Single Application Form (SAF).

As soon as we have completed the inspection, we will contact you if you have not met the minimum standards in which case we will tell you of the implications and future processes.

If your annual payment has been approved, your payment will be made towards the end of the calendar year.

For all other schemes we aim to make payment within 8 weeks of receiving your fully completed claim form.

Under European Regulation, we must check at least five per cent of the Forestry Grant Scheme claims each year and all schemes are subject to inspection.

What we will look for

Forest Service inspectors will check the information you provided in your application and claim for payment.

They will also make sure you are meeting the required Forestry Grant Scheme eligibility requirements incorporating EU regulatory requirements and demonstrating compliance with the UK Forestry Standard.

For example, this will involve:

- checking that the boundaries you have provided for the area of land you are claiming against are correct
- checking that the work has been implemented to the minimum standard required and to the quantity agreed, we will complete sample plots to determine tree numbers.
- All contract terms and conditions are being adhered to

If you fail part or all of your inspection, we will refer to this as a breach and may reduce your funding by the application of a Penalty System. Any reduction in payments will be assessed depending on how serious the breach is.

Our inspections underpin the correct payment of money under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme. So it's very important that you keep us up to date with any changes to your land.

6. Penalty System

Introduction

Forestry grants are funded under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) and administered by Forest Service. To comply with European Commission (EC) Regulation we are required to operate a system of reductions and penalties to payment claims under certain conditions.

Scope

The forestry grant schemes funded by the NIRDP will be subject to this penalty system and they are as follows;

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- Forest Expansion Scheme – Establishment Grant
- Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia
- Forest Protection Scheme
- Woodland Investment Grant

Application of Penalties

The penalty system will be applied to breaches due to;

- a failure to comply with scheme conditions or
- an applicant makes a false or misleading claim for grant payment

Amending Errors

Once a claim has been received it is seen as final and can only be amended by the competent authority (DAERA) when obvious errors are identified through an administrative check.

Beneficiaries who give notice to DAERA at any time of an incorrect claim for payment should not be subject to any administrative penalties irrespective of the reason for non-compliance, unless the beneficiary has been informed of DAERA's intention to carry out an inspection or DAERA has already informed the beneficiary of any non-compliance in the claim. If you give notice of an incorrect claim in the manner described a reduction to the claim may be applicable but the additional penalty will not be applied.

Force Majeure

Where a breach is due to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant and which could not be avoided by reasonable action, the Forest Service has discretion not to take action to recover or withhold payments. Forest Service must be notified of such an occurrence within 15 days. Further guidance on Force Majeure is available in the Scheme Information Book

Review of Decisions

The Review of Decisions process explained in the Forestry Grant Schemes Information Booklet will be used.

Penalties for Capital Items - Over Declaration of Expenditure⁵

Schemes -

- Forest Expansion Scheme - Establishment Grant
- Forestry Challenge Scheme
- Woodland Investment Grant

⁵ Article 63 of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 809/2014

Forest Service will examine the payment claim received from the beneficiary, and establish the amounts that are eligible for support. We shall establish:

- (a) the amount that you are due based on what you have claimed, and
- (b) what you are due after an inspection of the eligibility of the expenditure of your claim and supporting documentation.

If your claim exceeds by more than 10% the amount that you are eligible to be paid after our inspection of your claim a penalty equal to the difference between the your claim amount and the eligible amount will be applied. This is in **addition** to the reduction from your claim to reflect the over declaration of work.

The amount of the penalty shall not go beyond full withdrawal of the support.

Two worked examples are shown in table 1.

Table 1						
A	B	C	D	E	F	
Maximum approved for grant payment	Claimed for payment	Eligible after inspection	Over declaration [B-C]	Reduction from Claim [Equal to D]	Penalty	Payment [B-E-F]
20,000 trees @ 50p each [£10,000]	20,000 @ 50p each [£10,000]	18,500 @ 50p each [£9,250]	1,500 trees (8%) [£750]	1,500 trees @ 50p each [£750]	Zero [over declaration less than or equal to 10%]	£9,250 [£10,000 - £750 - £0]
20,000 @ 50p each [£10,000]	20,000 @ 50p each [£10,000]	15,000 @ 50p each [£7,500]	5,000 trees (33%) [£2,500]	5,000 trees @ 50p each [£2,500]	£2,500 [over declaration greater than 10%]	£5,000 [£10,000 - £2,500 - £2,500]

Rectifying a Capital Scheme Over Declaration

In some breaches, where the standard of work or end result does not meet the minimum standards **and** where this can be rectified with remedial activity, we can request that you put this breach right within a

set given time and we will withhold the grant payments until the works are rectified.

For example, a Forest Expansion Scheme claim includes a claim for tree shelters which the inspection found had not been fitted. The over declaration for tree shelters will be penalised at 100% over declaration. In addition, as the tree shelters were specified in your Forest Expansion Scheme Application they must be fitted and we will withhold payment until the works are rectified. We will not make payment for this element of your scheme.

Area Related Penalties⁶

Schemes -

- Forest Expansion Scheme - Annual Premia
- Woodland Investment Grant

Forest Service will examine the payment claim received from the beneficiary, and establish the area eligible for support. We shall establish:

- (a) the amount that you are due based on what you have claimed, and
- (b) what you are due after an inspection of the claim.

If we find that your claim exceeds what you are due following inspection of your claim an administrative penalty will be applied.

⁶ Article 19 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 640/2014

Level of Over declaration* of land	Reduction/Penalty Consequence
3% or less, or 2 hectares or less (whichever is the lesser area of land)	Payment area will be based on the eligible area determined following our inspection of your claim.
More than 3% or 2 hectares, and up to 20%	Payment area will be based on the eligible area determined following our inspection of your claim reduced by twice the difference between what you claimed and what you are due.
More than 20%	No payment made in the claim year.
More than 50%	No payment made in the claim year and in addition a penalty equal to the difference between what you claimed and what you are due will be applied.

* Calculated as the over declaration in hectares divided by the claimed area in hectares

Example

You claim for 7.64 hectares of Forest Expansion Scheme Annual Premia and our inspector finds that the area of the woodland is only 6.82 hectares. The difference between the two is 0.82 hectares which equates to 10.7% over declaration. Forest Service will restrict the payment to the eligible area (6.82 hectares) but as the difference is greater than 10%, we reduce this eligible area by the penalty of the difference (0.82 hectares) which means you would get paid for only 6.00 hectares in the claim year. In future, provided you claim for the eligible area, there will be no reduction /penalty.

Non Compliance with Eligibility Criteria other than Capital or Area Over Declaration⁷

Schemes -

- Forest Expansion Scheme - Establishment Grant
- Forest Protection Scheme
- Woodland Investment Grant

The EC regulation provides criteria that must be considered by Forest Service to determine the penalty applied in relation to non-respect of eligibility criteria. To implement this we have developed a framework and guidance document to assist with a consistent and transparent approach. Breaches relating to non-respect of eligibility criteria will result in penalties of between 10% and 100%. The full guidance document and penalty framework is included in annex 1.

Forestry Grant Schemes are multiannual commitments and aid reductions and exclusions may also apply to the amounts already paid in the previous years for that commitment.

⁷ Article 35 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 640/2014

Annex 1

Non-Respect of Eligibility Criteria

Forest Service is required by EC regulation to determine the amount of penalty taking account of; intent, extent, severity, permanence and repetition of the non respect found.

The guidance below provides assistance to taking each factor into account and the table below indicates the consequence arising from the non compliance.

Extent

- Minimum - Up to and including 0.5 ha or up to and including 10% of area managed whichever is the greater
- Medium - Over 0.5 ha and over 10% and up to and including 50% of area managed
- High - Over 0.5 ha and more than 50% of area managed

Severity - Low or high

Determined by the inspector/officer and based on the importance of the consequences of the non compliance, taking into account the original objectives.

Duration - The length of time which the effects lasts and the timescale in which any breach can be rectified - if at all.

- Effect rectifiable within a year
- Effect is permanent

Reoccurrence

A breach will be determined as a repetition where the same breach is found on the same site / claimant in subsequent scheme years.

Penalty Framework

Extent	Severity	Duration	Consequence		1 st repeat	2 nd repeat
Min	Low	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required, no financial penalty until 1 st repeat		Apply 15% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-
	High	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required	Apply 10% penalty	Apply 30% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-
Extent	Severity	Permanence	Consequence		1 st repeat	2 nd repeat
Medium	Low	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required, no financial penalty until 1 st repeat		Apply 20% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-
	High	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required	Apply 20% penalty	Apply 40% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-
Extent	Severity	Permanence	Consequence		1 st repeat	2 nd repeat
High	Low	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required, no financial penalty until 1 st repeat		Apply 30% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-
	High	Rectifiable within the year	Letter detailing remedial work required	Apply 30% penalty	Apply 60% penalty	Apply 100% penalty
		Permanent	Withhold current and future payments and recover previous payments through 'right to recover process' for area in question		-	-

7. Transfer of Ownership

Any change of ownership e.g. through sale, re-letting or death of the owner between the date when an application is approved and the date of final payment or period of commitment must be reported to the Forest Service in writing by the original applicant or his successor who assumes the position of the original applicant within 12 months from the date of transfer. Following a satisfactory site inspection carried out by a Forest Service Inspector, a Transfer of Application form (issued by Forest Service) must be completed and returned along with a solicitor's letter confirming the changes, to the Forest Service, by the new owner before he can be eligible to receive any instalment of the grant under the original application. On completion and return of this form the new owner assumes all the rights, liabilities and obligations in place of the original applicant and his successors. This also applies to subsequent changes of ownership accordingly. In the case where an original agreement holder has died, the agreement will cease with no further payments, liabilities or obligations. Any new occupier wishing to join the scheme in such circumstances must notify Forest Service as soon as they take over the woodland and that new occupier will be eligible to receive annual payments providing that they submit an application to enter as a successor within 12 months of the termination of occupation by the previous occupier.

In the event of a sale or other disposition, the original applicant (and his/her successors) should consider seeking appropriate indemnities to cover their continuing obligations until the new owner completes the Transfer of Application form (and thereby assumes the position of the original applicant from that date.

You should also be aware that conversion of woodland to another type of land use (Deforestation) is subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Deforestation may constitute a relevant project, as it might have a significant effect on the environment, and as such, consent for the work is required from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Forest Service.

8. Relationship with Other EU Area Based Schemes

Basic Payment Scheme

Land that was eligible and on which Single Farm Payment was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) converted to forestry under an EU scheme **remains eligible for the duration of the Forestry Grant Scheme agreement.**

Dual Funding

DAERA is required to exclude dual funding under EU Regulations. Forest Service therefore cannot pay grant if the aims of proposed woodland operations conflicts with, or duplicate, any previous public funding such as Agri-Environment Schemes.

If you have had an application approved under one of the Agri-Environment Schemes you should discuss the proposed forestry planting with your local agriculture office at an early stage to ensure that the planting does not conflict with the objectives of these Schemes or constitute dual funding.

Greening Payment

The Forest Expansion Scheme includes a risk of Greening double funding and the full value of the income forgone element [Forest Expansion Scheme – Annual Premia] is excluded if there is an overlap with Greening requirements.

Cross Compliance

The term cross-compliance refers to the requirement for farmers to comply with a set of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and to keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) in order to qualify for payments under the Forestry Grant Schemes.

There are two aspects to Cross-Compliance. The first of these is compliance with specific articles contained within 13 European regulatory requirements covering the environment, climate change, public health, animal health, plant health and animal welfare. These are known as the Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs).

The second aspect of Cross-Compliance is a requirement that all those in receipt of payments in respect of the area-based schemes maintain all their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC). The Northern Ireland GAEC Measures have been developed from a framework set out by the European Commission to address the following issues:

- **Protection and management of water** - protect water against pollution and run-off, and manage the use of water;

- **Protection of soil and carbon stock** - minimum soil cover, prevention of erosion and maintenance of soil organic matter levels;
- **Minimum level of maintenance** - retention of landscape features and avoiding the deterioration of habitats.

All applicants to Forestry Grant Schemes must meet the Northern Ireland Cross Compliance conditions in order to qualify for full payments. The conditions are designed to promote sustainable agricultural practices and reflect a number of environmental and other objectives. They are good farm management practices, and encourage responsible stewardship of the land. All European Union member states have to implement Cross-Compliance.

A full version of the Cross-Compliance standards, including advice on how to meet them and what an inspector will be looking for during inspection, together with a summary version are published on the DARD website at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/cross-compliance-verifiable-standards>

A breach of these requirements may lead to a partial or complete withholding of payments in respect of the above schemes. **It is important to remember that you are still bound by all other environmental and animal health and welfare laws.** You may still be prosecuted in the criminal courts for breaching the Cross-Compliance standards, if the breach is a criminal offence.

General Cross-Compliance Information

Cross-Compliance applies to all land within an agricultural holding for the full 12 calendar months. This includes permanently held land (either

owned or under an agricultural tenancy), common land, shared grazing and land taken in conacre. In addition, if you receive funding under a Forestry Grant Scheme, Cross-Compliance applies to the land under the Forestry Grant Scheme agreement.

Cross-Compliance also applies to the agricultural activity undertaken by the beneficiaries of the schemes listed at the start of the section.

You should note that the Cross-Compliance rules vary across England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Where your holding crosses a border you may have to make different arrangements on each side of the border. You should therefore obtain copies of all relevant guidance that applies to your holding.

9. Force Majeure

Force majeure or exceptional circumstances is defined as 'unusual circumstances, outside the control of the trader, the consequences of which, in spite of the exercise of all due care, could not have been avoided except at the cost of excessive sacrifice'. A landowner may experience a force majeure incident or exceptional circumstance that impacts on his ability to meet the eligibility criteria for any of the Forestry Grant Schemes covered in this booklet. Cases of force majeure are determined against their particular circumstances and on an individual basis, for example, your woodland may have been made ineligible following a gorse/heath fire or affected by a new tree disease that you could not prevent.

You should always notify the Department at the earliest possible opportunity of any force majeure situation that renders a portion of woodland out of use, even if only for a short time.

So, if for reasons of force majeure or exceptional circumstances some, or all, of your land is not available to you, or is ineligible for a Forestry Grant Scheme, or any other area based scheme, at any time during the year, you should tell us when you submit your claim or within fifteen working days of the date of being in a position to do so. If you do not, and we later discover that the land was taken out of woodland at any time during the year, we may consider that there is an over-declaration of land and apply a penalty to your claim.

For us to consider force majeure or exceptional circumstances, the woodland must be unavailable to you on 15 May in the scheme year or ineligible for a Forestry Grant Scheme for at least some part of the calendar year. The land must be able to be returned to woodland use or become eligible for a Forestry Grant Scheme. You must provide clear documentation indicating when the land is likely to come back into woodland use.

If your land is ineligible for a Forestry Grant Scheme for the whole year, and is removed permanently from woodland use, we will not consider force majeure or exceptional circumstances.

Notifying a Force Majeure event to Forest Service

Should you consider force majeure applies to your application because of any unforeseen event you should contact Grants and Regulations Branch (full address at Annex) immediately for advice. You should be aware that, for us to consider a case of force majeure or exceptional circumstances, we need to be told in writing **within 15 days of the date**

of you being in a position to do so (this was previously ten working days).

When you tell us of a 'force majeure' you will be asked to complete an FML1⁸ application form. We will look at each request individually and where we agree that force majeure or exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated, we will not normally apply penalties. You will have to prove that, despite taking all reasonable measures to counteract their effects, the force majeure or exceptional circumstances prevented you from meeting your obligations. You must be able to provide information, supported by documentary evidence, of the steps you have taken to prevent or lessen the effect of these circumstances. It is important that you do not wait until the 'Review of Decisions' stage to notify the Department of force majeure or exceptional circumstances, as this will normally be considered to be outside the 15 working day notification period.

10. Review of Decisions

Under the Review of Decisions procedure, applicants have a right to request a review of a decision made by the Department in relation to their Forestry Grant Scheme. The review process is intended to provide applicants with a fair, impartial and transparent assessment of the Department's decision against the framework of EU and National Regulations and Scheme Rules. The aim of the procedure is to ensure that the decision made is correct and in line with the appropriate Regulations and Scheme rules.

⁸ An example 2015 FML1 form is available here <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2016-force-majeure-application-form>

The Stage One Review is an internal review conducted by staff in Grants and Regulations Branch (full address at Annex 2), who were not involved in making the original decision. When the Stage One Review is complete you are issued with the decision and a copy of the Case Officer's report.

The Stage Two Review process provides a choice of a written or oral review for which you will have to pay a fee. Stage Two is a review by an External Panel which makes a recommendation to the Department. The final decision will be made by the Head of Paying Agency. You can only proceed to Stage Two when the Stage One Review has been completed. If your Stage Two Review is successful, we will refund your review fee.

Detailed information on the Review of Decisions process can be found in the "Review of Decisions Procedure" (2015) Booklet which can be viewed on the DAERA website at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-decisions-procedure>

11. Environmental Standards & Regulation

Introduction

Environmental safeguards are an essential component of the Forestry Grant Schemes and are enforced through application approval and monitoring procedures. On receipt, all applications are assessed to ensure they meet the environmental standards set out in the UK Forestry Standard and the associated guidelines. Your application must also be compliant with Article 6 of Commission Regulation (EU) No

807/2014 which includes the requirement that species selection must consist of:

(i) the exclusive planting of ecologically adapted species and/or species resilient to climate change in the bio- geographical area concerned, which have not been found, through an assessment of impacts, to threaten biodiversity and ecosystem services, or to have a negative impact on human health;

(ii) a mix of tree species which includes either:

— at least 10 % of broadleaved trees by area, or

— a minimum of three tree species or varieties, with the least abundant making up at least 10 % of the area.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Proposals for new planting are subject to an assessment in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. These Regulations provide thresholds above which there is a determination of the need for an environmental impact assessment for all afforestation projects, forest quarry operations, forest road works and deforestation projects (Figure 1). In exceptional cases where the project does not exceed the threshold, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may still be necessary.

Sensitive areas include Nature Reserves or Areas of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, sites designated or identified as candidates for Special Areas of Conservation, and sites classified or proposed as Special Protection Areas.

Figure 1 – Area Thresholds in Accordance with Schedule 2 of the EIA (Forestry) Regulations (NI) 2006

Operation	Threshold where any part of the land is in a sensitive area	Threshold where no part of the land is in a sensitive area
Forest Quarries	No threshold	1 hectare
Forest Road Works	No threshold	1 hectare
Afforestation	2 hectares where the land is in a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. No thresholds in other sensitive areas	5 hectares
Deforestation	0.5 hectares where the land is a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. No thresholds in other sensitive areas	1 hectare

You may view a list of Sensitive Areas on the DAERA website

Special Protection Areas and Special areas of Conservation

A European network of wildlife sites known as ‘Natura 2000’ was established under the Habitats Directive. This network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required if any part of the project area is considered to have a potential impact on a Natura 2000 Site by being located within, adjacent or upstream to a European Site. It

describes the process of gathering information and submitting it to a competent authority (Forest Service) for consideration and evaluation.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 provides protection for ASSIs which represent the best of our wildlife and geological sites. Landowners are obliged to notify the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) of potentially harmful operations planned to take place within an ASSI. Landowners should seek consent from Conservation, Designations and Protection (CDP), NIEA in advance of submitting an application to Forest Service.

Biodiversity features

Important biodiversity features such as watercourses, lakes, hedgerows and unimproved species rich grasslands may not always be designated. Project proposals must take biodiversity and cultural features into consideration and adherence to the UK Forestry Standard and the associated guidelines will be a pre-requisite for any application.

Historic monuments

Landowners have a statutory obligation under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 to protect any scheduled ancient monuments and historic buildings within the site boundary. Where you believe intended works may directly impact a scheduled monument you must contact NIEA- Historic Environment Division before submitting an application. Similar arrangements apply to unscheduled sites where their location has been identified.

You may view locations of Built Heritage features on the NIEA website
<http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/MapView/>

Felling Licences

Owners of private woodlands of 0.2 hectares or more may require a licence to fell trees. A licence will only be issued if an approved felling management plan includes a proposal to re-establish the woodland. Further information may be obtained from the Forest Service website:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/felling-licences>

Powerlines

If there is a power line within your site or sufficiently close to your boundary where newly planted trees could have a potential impact on the line, you must inform Northern Ireland Electricity of your plans in writing.

You will be required to provide evidence that you have consulted NIE Networks particularly in relation to the area to remain unplanted in the vicinity of the powerline based on the tree and shrub species that you intend to plant. You must submit this evidence with your application before Forest Service will issue a letter of offer.

You are advised to allow a period of four weeks for the consultation with NIE Networks They can be contacted on 03457 643 643 and further contact details are given in the link below

<http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/Contact-Us>

12. State Aid Details

Scheme Name	State Aid Reference
Forest Expansion Scheme	SA. 43339
Forest Protection Scheme	SA. 43340
Woodland Investment Grant	SA. 43338

Full details published separately in a State Aid Booklet on the DAERA website.

13. References

- Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010
 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2010/10/contents>
- Northern Ireland Forestry
 - [A Strategy for Sustainability and Growth \(Forest Service 2006\)](#) ISBN 1 85527 859 6
- The UK Forestry Standard, Government's approach to sustainable forestry (Forestry Commission, Forest Service, 2011)
 - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/UKFS> ISBN: 978-0-85538-830-0
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014
 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R0702>
- Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020
 - <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2014-2020-rural-development-programme-version-2>
- Guide to Area-based Schemes (DAERA 2016)
 - <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/area-based-schemes-2016-information-and-guidance> ISBN: 978-1-84807-516-0
- UK Biosecurity Action Plan
 - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/biosecurityactionplan>
- UK Plant Health Risk Register
 - <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/>
- Guidance on Road Classification and the Primary Route Network
 - www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315783/road-classification-guidance.pdf

Annex 1 - Forest Block Definition

For the purposes of the Forest Expansion Scheme, a forest block will be defined by a natural or man-made feature, such as a watercourse over two metres in width, a public road categorised as motorway or A, B or C-class⁹, or where a woodland is surrounded by land under a different land-use. The block itself may contain unclassified roads, forest roads and tracks, streams which can be easily crossed, hedges, stone walls and fences and will be under a single ownership. If the block is to extend over an unclassified road, the area to be afforested on each side of the road must be at least 0.5 hectare in size with a minimum width of 20m. Some areas of open ground within the block may be included. Areas of open space must not exceed 0.5ha and must be bordered on at least three sides by trees or be unplanted linear features such as set-backs associated with forest roads, wayleaves, firebreaks and watercourses. Collectively these unplanted areas should form no more than 20% of the total area of a forest block. Unplanted strips intended for access to facilitate hedge or drain maintenance are not classed as open space where they are less than 5 metres wide.

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315783/road-classification-guidance.pdf

Annex 2 – Forest Service Headquarters

Public office opening hours are 10.00 am – 16.00 pm each working day

The Forest Service customer number is 028 6634 3019

Forest Service Headquarters
Grants & Regulations Branch
Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin Industrial Estate
Killyhevlin
Enniskillen
Co. Fermanagh
BT74 4EJ

Email; grants.forests@daera-ni.gov.uk

If you have a disability which impairs you applying for a planting grant, the staff listed above would be pleased to assist, explaining the contents of the Information Booklet and filling in an Application Form.

Annex 3 - Data Protection & Freedom of Information

The Department takes data protection and freedom of information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information supplied to it is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, the Department may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information legislation. These include:

- Administration of the Common Agricultural Policy and other aid schemes;
- The production and safety of food;
- Management of land and other environmental controls;
- Animal health and welfare;
- Occupational health and welfare;
- Compilation of statistics;
- Disclosure to other organisations when required to do so; and
- Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 where such disclosure is in the public interest.

The Department is also required under European legislation to publish information on all subsidy payments. This will include the business name and postcode.

DAERA, Forest Service

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