

Offcuts

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Encouraging prospects for the potential to grow and develop the market for Scots pine timber from northern Scotland are identified in a study report published by the Forestry Commission. The report is entitled "Scots pine timber quality in Northern Scotland: market development study - final report". It is available for downloading from the silviculture and timber properties pages in the sustainable forest management area of the Forest Research website, www.forestreresearch.gov.uk. Further information is available from Elspeth Macdonald (elspeth.macdonald@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) in Forest Research.

Did you know? From 1st April 2009, only timber which originates from either an independently verified legal and sustainable source or from a 'licensed' Forest Law Enforcement, Governance & Trade (FLEGT) partner will be used on UK Government property. This change will initially only apply in England, Great Britain and UK departments and their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies. It is anticipated that the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will follow suit in the near future.

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Grey Squirrel Control

Author: Author Simon Jacyna, Senior Woodlands Consultant, SAC

Do you have both red and grey squirrels in your woodlands or are you concerned that greys may shortly make an appearance as they are present locally?

The dire plight of the native red squirrel, whose range is still decreasing due to the advance of the non-native grey squirrel, has attracted much publicity recently. Several projects are underway around the country to try and reverse this situation.

An important part of the conservation effort is to control grey squirrels by trapping. This is especially important in the frontline areas – these are the woodlands which contain both reds and greys, and areas close by.



The costs of grey squirrel control are now funded under Rural Priorities, part of the SRDP. There is an annual payment of £187 per trap for carrying out six trapping sessions of ten days each. There should be roughly one trap for each hectare of woodland.

Application for this grant is relatively simple. The main component is a simple management plan that

We are now all coming to grips with SRDP and what this means for forestry and small woodland management. Undoubtedly there are some who are disappointed in the level of forestry support and the complexity of the system. These problems were recognised by Michael Russell, the Environment Minister, and the review he commissioned from Confor has been positively received. We report on this, and other imminent changes, below. A lot of work is going on behind the scenes to resolve the difficulties and help shape the SRDP into a scheme that will deliver the Scottish Forest Strategy and support all woodland owners and managers. Alex Morris's article provides information on recent changes.

Times were when the modest and steady returns from forestry look unattractive, old fashioned and a little dated, especially when we compared them to the financial money markets. However, the good news is that many farmers and woodland owners are now beginning, and quite justifiably, to feel very satisfied with their decisions to plant small commercial woodlands.

In this issue we concentrate again on SRDP and some core technical woodland establishment and management considerations.

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details how the trapping will be carried out, the records to be kept and a map to show the layout of the traps.

Full guidance on trapping procedures is contained in Forestry Commission Practice Note 4 - 'Controlling Grey Squirrel Damage to Woodlands', published in 2007. Further information is contained in Practice Note 5 - 'Red Squirrel Conservation' and Information Note 076 - 'Habitat Use by Red and Grey Squirrels'. These can all be downloaded free of charge from the Forestry Commission website.

Owners of small woodlands need not feel that this is impractical for them. In many cases it will be possible to group together and work co-operatively and perhaps jointly employ a local trapper or work in association with a neighbouring estate, or Forestry Commission or trappers funded by SNH.

One advantage of a joint approach is that this counts as 'collaboration' under the SRDP

scoring system and may help to increase your score. However, even without formal collaboration, experience to date suggests that most applications should score 14 points - comfortably above the pass-mark in the judging rounds so far.

SAC is carrying out grey squirrel control on its own estate at Craibstone, near Aberdeen. We are literally on the 'frontline' - our keeper has seen a red and grey nose to nose on one of the lawns - and have forty traps in operation.

We have recently helped to run (jointly with SNH, Forestry Commission and the local Squirrel Project Officer) two training courses on all aspects of applying for grant support and setting up a grey squirrel control programme. We would be happy to pass on our experience to date to as many people as possible and may be able to help with similar training events elsewhere in the country.

For more information please contact Paul Chapman, 01467 625385 or Simon Jacyna, 01343 548787.

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New countryside grant system offers plenty of scope for the creative ! A consultant's view.

Authors: Harry Frew – MD Cheviot Trees Ltd and Roger Smith – Independent Forestry Consultant

The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) was launched in the Spring of this year. The flow of grant applications has been slow with many potential applicants deterred by the complexity of the online application process. For those prepared to persevere however the potential rewards can be significant where lateral thinking and diverse planning is applied to the situation.

SRDP is the Scottish Government's new umbrella grant funding programme for rural areas, offering some £1.6 billion of funding over the next six years. Designed to provide economic, environmental and social benefits, targeted areas include improving business viability, enhancing biodiversity and landscape, improving water quality, tackling climate change and supporting rural communities – to list but a few.



The diverse nature of this new scheme means there is plenty of scope to build on what might previously have been a simple tree planting, land management or building project application, and turn it into something more expansive, creative and exciting.

One of the main advantages

of the new umbrella approach offered by the SRDP, is that it provides greater scope to tap into new areas and expand a basic idea within the one application. Farmers considering planting near a water course for example might also look at ancillary environmental measures such as willow *spiling* to prevent river bank erosion, wetland planting or planning a pond which can prove an effective pollution control measure and a business investment project on a farm.



Improved water quality is one of the headline aims of the SRDP. Some simple planning can quickly produce a working wetland. By intercepting outfalls of run-off from farm steadings, agricultural field drains, septic overflows, livestock washings and the like, and by diverting these through a series of settling ponds and reedbeds, the waste water can be naturally purified whilst simultaneously creating an attractive wildlife and conservation habitat and an environmental feature .

Working 24/7 to produce clean outflow water and requiring minimal maintenance we are finding that a lot of landowners are considering this as an

attractive way to not only do their bit for the environment but also to deal with what can potentially be a costly problem. This type of solution can prove particularly effective for those in Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZs) as a means of tackling run off and diffuse pollution, and offers any farming business the potential to increase efficiency, another key objective of the SRDP.



Statistics show that around 60 per cent of the trees and shrubs currently planted in the UK are imported, and the majority of these are of untraceable source. At a time when traceability and reducing carbon emissions are high priorities, home grown stock produced by a local business which employs local labour and contributes to the local rural economy, has to be a better option. Not only that, but hard hit by the credit crunch and current financial instability, European growers are cutting back on stocks, and certain species are already in short supply. Hence it will no longer be as easy to readily source plants from UK nurseries either that have not been pre ordered, and some advance planning will therefore become increasingly vital to the success

of any planting project. Contract growing and forward ordering of stock gives assured supply also at best rates.



The stated SRDP priorities also include addressing climate change, the loss of biodiversity and diversification of the rural business. Tree and woodland planting can help to provide answers to all the priorities with planting for wood fuel and wood energy addressing all three. Perhaps most popular is short rotation coppicing of willow, but short rotation forestry, a close relative of conventional forestry, but with felling on an 8 to 20 year cycle, dependant on tree species, is another sometimes simpler option.

We suggest three fundamental pointers for anyone considering SRDP funded projects.

Firstly, get some good first hand advice – work with a local grower will always be able to offer insight into what will work best in your locality.

Secondly, if unable to plant yourself, engaging reliable and experienced contractors is essential.

Lastly, timely maintenance is key. Why go to all that effort unless the good work is going to be maintained in the long term?



“Modern agriculture and land management requires farmers to think outside of the box. Whilst the new SRDP scheme

may be slightly cumbersome in operation, it does have great potential for those prepared and able to think creatively and take advantage of the all encompassing objectives of the scheme. Business improvement, increased efficiency and environmental awareness are vital at this difficult time of financial uncertainty and scrutiny under the public eye. As the first in line to take this approach to grant funding, the Scottish Government is leading the way, hence some teething problems are inevitable. However, the funding is there for the taking, and with some good advice and a little imagination, Scottish farmers can reap the rewards.

Why use treeshelters?

Author: Tim Oliver, Tubex Ltd.

In contrast to the SFGS, there is currently no separate provision within the new SRDP Woodland Creation grants for the use of individual tree protection. However, over and above the capital grant for tree planting, there is funding available for fencing. This being the case, what might prompt a landowner to use individual tree protection against marauding herbivores rather than simply fence the whole plot?

There are many factors to be considered when deciding which method to use to protect young trees from deer/hare/rabbit predation, some of which are listed opposite:-

- Level of infestation and therefore susceptibility to serious damage
- Block size/shape and topography/elevation
- Accessibility and ease of maintenance
- Speed of establishment and survival rates
- Size and type of planting stock to be used
- Importance of timber value of final crop
- Other factors such as potential sporting use of planted land

Block size/shape and topography/elevation are often the first factors to be considered and in many cases level, regularly shaped large blocks are generally thought to be suitable for fencing. However, features such as rivers, stone walls, footpaths and stony ground can make fencing a less practical option and more difficult/costly to erect and maintain. Proximity to existing woodland can also have a bearing, where resident animals such as

badger, fox, deer and, in certain parts of the country, wild boar have frequently used tracks, which may be obstructed by fencing. Experience shows that these tracks are often quickly re-established; breaching a newly erected fence and making the whole block of newly planted woodland vulnerable to damage. If fencing the whole block is to be considered, regular monitoring and repair of the fence must be factored in by the planting contractor. Experience of leaving the fence monitoring and maintenance task to the landowner has proved almost universally unsuccessful, despite protestations of best intentions by the landowner.

Particularly on Scottish upland sites, although access may not necessarily be a problem at the establishment stage, repeated visits to maintain new woodlands may well cost the landowner more money than is received in maintenance grants. Therefore, if we allow that both fencing (if properly maintained) and individual tree protection will effectively protect young trees from animal predation, we have to ascertain whether either method offers additional benefits over and above their primary function.

It is generally accepted that apart from providing a physical barrier, which prevents deer/hare/rabbit from attacking young trees, fencing offers no additional benefits in terms of cheaper maintenance or better/quicker establishment of the plantation. The opposite is true of individual tree protection, in particular when using the translucent, solid-walled treeshelters such as those manufactured by Tubex or Acorn.

In addition to providing protection from animal attack, solid treeshelters (as opposed to nets) provide a barrier against accidental spray damage and allow speedy herbicide application using knapsack sprayers or even (in the right circumstances) mechanised spraying. Spot spraying around unprotected trees within fenced enclosures has to be undertaken extremely carefully using a spray shield, and efficacy depends on the attention and skill of

the spray operator. The process of finding an unprotected tree in order to spray around it when hidden amongst heavy weed growth is difficult and time consuming, and attempting to spray onto tall vegetation is not advised due to the risk of spray 'drift'. Timing of the operation is therefore crucial as

once the vegetation has reached a critical height, spraying becomes either impossible or more costly, and mechanical methods of weed control become the only option. However, if the tree has been protected with, for example, a 1.2m high treeshelter, there is almost no risk of spray 'drift', the plant is easily located and therefore the operation is quicker (hence less costly), more effective and not as 'time sensitive'.

Treeshelters provide an ideal micro-climate for the young tree. Air temperature within the tube is slightly higher than outside (similar to an unheated greenhouse) and this factor,

combined with the benefits of retained moisture around the root of the plant, enhances survival rates and ensures speedier growth when compared with unprotected plants. On exposed sites wind buffeting can dramatically reduce survival percentages of young trees, and once again, solid treeshelters or part-ventilated shelters provide a physical barrier against such damage.

Stocking densities for most new broadleaf plantations in Scotland are not those that would normally be used to encourage top quality timber production, which, in truth, is not the prime motivation for establishment of the broadleaf element of the plantation in the first place. However, the market for fine quality, home-grown hardwoods may improve by the time the plantation is ready for harvest and, by using treeshelters during the establishment period, timber quality can be enhanced. At an average 2.4m spacing neighbouring trees are less likely to compete for light, and therefore the benefits that light competition offers in terms of encouraging straight stemmed, early growth, vital in the production of top quality timber, are less pronounced. However, solid, tubular treeshelters simulate the required conditions to



produce straight stemmed trees, encouraging a single apical bud to 'strive' for the light at the top of the treeshelter. Strong apical dominance discourages lateral growth and therefore reduces the need for low pruning.

Un-protected trees planted within fenced enclosures need to be relatively large in order to stand a good chance of survival. In fact, when planting amongst deep brash, it's often very difficult to see smaller trees, making any maintenance operation, especially the late summer beat-up assessment, more time consuming and less reliable; therefore larger trees are often preferred in fenced plots. These larger trees cost more to buy and to transport than smaller trees and also take longer to plant. In addition to the extra cost, there's good evidence to suggest that the 'shock' of transplanting a larger tree takes longer to wear off than the 'shock' of transplanting a smaller tree, particularly in situations where water stress is an issue, and survival rates are often higher when planting smaller trees. The use of treeshelters makes it possible to plant much

smaller trees, being confident that each tree will be easily identified and protected by the treeshelter, and with the benefits already outlined above, to also be confident of survival and rapid establishment of the plantation. Many examples can be shown where smaller trees planted in treeshelters have caught up with and often exceeded growth of larger, un-protected trees after just a few years.

The final factor to be taken into account when deciding whether to use fencing or individual tree protection is that of the impact of each method on the sporting or recreational potential of the newly planted woodland. Individual tree protection is generally considered to have little impact on sporting or recreational potential, although it could be argued that treeshelters provide excellent 'markers' for the young trees, preventing them from being trampled by beaters or rambles. Fencing on the other hand can impose unwanted barriers to walk-ways and game 'runs' and potentially lethal obstacles for fleeing animals or low-flying birds.

Creating productive broadleaved woodlands – sourcing and using selected or improved tree planting stock

Author: *Dr. Scott McGWilson MICFor, Consultant Forester and Forest Ecologist, Aberdeen*

There is currently increasing interest in the management of hardwoods in Scotland for the production of quality timber. This includes the native broadleaves such as oak, ash, silver birch, cherry and alder, along with long-standing introduced species, primarily sycamore and beech. Markets for the major home-grown hardwood timbers have been significantly developed in recent years, with the advent of the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS)¹ alongside longer established markets in England and the near Continent. For almost all applications, from furniture, through joinery work to flooring, the production of straight, defect-free, butt logs of at least 6m (18ft) length is desirable. These can be achieved with an effective combination of the right site, the right planting stock and the right management practices.

Many farm woodland planting projects likely to be

undertaken within the new SRDP scheme² offer the opportunity for quality hardwood timber production, especially where fertile ex-agricultural land is afforested below the 200m height contour. The scheme offers significantly enhanced Woodland Creation Grants for establishment of productive hardwoods to reflect the higher initial stocking density required and the greater investment in young growth tending. There are also potentially Sustainable Forest Management grants available for later work to enhance the timber potential of hardwood stands, for example by early thinnings and formative prunings.

Importance of planting stock

The productive potential of any hardwood planting site is only likely to be realised if the choice of species and planting stock is sound from the outset.

Species should be chosen using a systematic tool for site evaluation such as the Forestry Commission Ecological Site Classification (ESC)³, taking account of climate and soil conditions. In most cases it will also be sensible to give thought to predicted climate change when selecting tree species for woodland creation. Hence, professional advice on planting scheme design will usually be required.

Having selected the tree species, it is also essential to obtain planting stock of these that is suitable for productive forestry. As a minimum standard, stock should be sufficiently well adapted to the conditions of the site to establish readily (without mortality) and to grow well once established. This basic criterion can often be met by stock of a local provenance, but also by stock from another area when there is known to be a good ecological match between the source and planting sites. Stock from unknown or unsuitable provenances should not be used, as it carries a risk of expensive and frustrating failures.

There is also often considerable additional value in using planting stock that has been selected based on its tendency to produce straight butt logs, suitable for quality timber. Selections can be made at the individual parent tree level (known as “plus tree selection”) or at stand level (“seed stand selection”). There is strong evidence that such selected sources capture “good genes” for timber form characters, which will be manifested in new plantings, resulting in higher timber values. As the cost of plants is usually a minor element of overall scheme establishment costs, any investment in obtaining superior quality stock is likely to be well justified.

Relevance of local origin stock

Over the past 10-15 years there has been considerable discussion of the use of “local origin” stock for native tree plantings. This is material derived from the natural tree populations of an area, which are thought to display genetic adaptations to local conditions, acquired through natural selection since the end of the last ice age, when trees recolonised Scotland. Use of local origin stock helps to conserve the genetic biodiversity of native tree populations and will normally offer a greater chance of good establishment and survival. However, local origins alone will not guarantee

superior timber form traits, unless the source has also been selected for these⁴.

The importance placed on using local origin stock for native species will generally be greatest where trees are being planted within or near existing ancient semi-natural woodlands, or where the scheme objectives emphasise biodiversity.⁵ However, where new broadleaved woodlands are being created on farmland, primarily for timber production, a wider range of planting stock will remain suitable.

Sources of selected and improved stock

There are basically two sources of selected and improved planting stock:-

1. *Seed stands* – collections can be made from one of the many superior stands that are recorded on the Forestry Commission’s Register of Basic Material as “Selected”⁶. There are a good number of such stands in the UK for oak and beech, with a smaller number for ash, sycamore and other species. Additional superior stands can be accepted for registration by the FC, following inspection. Traditionally, superior stock of species such as oak and beech was also sourced from seed stands in France, Belgium and north Germany. These may remain suitable for use in Scotland, particularly given predictions of future climate change. Climate and soil compatibility between the seed stand and planting sites should be considered – e.g. beech from a seed stand on a chalky site in southern England may not be well suited to an acid sandy planting site in Moray. Similarly birch from a seed stand at 250m elevation at Rannoch may not be the best for planting in lowland Angus.
2. *Seed orchards* – these are effectively artificial seed stands created by grouping together clonal offspring of selected individual “plus trees” from across a region of the country. Seed orchards are normally created as an element of research and tree breeding programmes. They often produce planting stock with a greater degree of “genetic gain” than collections from seed stands, as the selection is more intensive. They also have the advantage that they are usually located and managed in order to make seed

collections easier than from traditional mature seed stands in the field. Where improved planting stock from a seed orchard has been shown to be superior to that from general collections, the orchard can be registered as “tested” by FC.

Seed orchards - the role of BIHIP

The establishment of clonal seed orchards for hardwood tree species takes considerable time and financial investment to reach the point of bulk plant production for planting schemes. Some such work had been undertaken previously, mainly by the Forestry Commission, but little improved planting stock remained available for hardwood species by the 1990's. The British & Irish Hardwood Improvement Programme (BIHIP)⁷ was established some 15 years ago to pursue renewed work of this kind and to make available selected and improved planting stock for the common hardwoods. BIHIP operates as a collaborative venture between timber growers, nurseries, forestry researchers and hardwood processors, funded by a combination of public-sector grants and charitable donations. Each tree species of interest has a specialist group within BIHIP. So far tree improvement work has been initiated for oak, ash, sycamore, silver birch, cherry, sweet chestnut and walnut, with exploratory work on beech. In each case a selection of superior plus trees has been made across regions of the UK, and one or more seed orchards is being created based on these. Much of this work has been planned and implemented from southern and western England, but the work on silver birch has a strong northern focus.

Scottish-based regional seed orchards have been established for silver birch at the Forestry Commission Northern Research Station and are now starting to yield early seed crops. These are being used to take forward the process of genetic gain testing with a view to obtaining tested status for the orchards. Similar orchards are planned in Scotland for ash and sycamore in the next few years, and may be pursued later for oak and beech.

Ordering planting stock

At present, the major source of selected planting stock for farm plantings will be from seed stand collections grown on by tree nurseries. When

commercial quantities of seed become available from the BIHIP seed orchards, similar arrangements are likely to apply.

For productive hardwood plantings, the order of declining preference for seed sourcing should be (1) a tested regional seed orchard; (2) a selected seed stand in Scotland; (3) a selected seed stand in England and Wales; (4) a selected seed stand on the near Continent; (5) a source identified seed stand of above average timber form in the same region as the planting site. Wherever the source is not local, greater consideration should be given to ensuring that there is an ecological match with the planting site – climate, elevation and soil are key factors in assessing this.

One very important consideration when sourcing planting stock from a nursery is to give adequate advance notice under a “contract growing” arrangement. Collection of seed from a selected seed stand and growing on of plants in the nursery to the required size may take up to 3 years. For species which seed infrequently in Scotland, such as oak and beech, this may often prove to be longer.

There is a perceived logistical problem with advance ordering, as landowners would potentially need to commit to buying plants before they have secured an SRDP woodland creation grant contract. However, where plants are ordered at short notice to meet the timetable of a planting project, it is unlikely to be possible to obtain stock from a specified source. Even by enquiring of any number of tree nurseries, it may not be possible to obtain desirable planting stock quickly. Owners should discuss this with their FC Woodland Officer⁸ in advance. A delay to planting is generally to be preferred over use of poor stock, which may compromise future scheme outcomes.

Establishment and tending

Even where selected or improved planting stock is used, its potential will not be realised unless plant handling, establishment and young growth tending are effective. Good advice on these matters is available from Forestry Commission and SAC publications⁹.

Whether bare root or containerised planting stock is used, arrangements should be in place for it to be

planted out as soon as possible. Storage and handling of planting stock prior to planting is often a cause of deterioration and subsequent poor establishment success, especially in dry weather and with bare rooted stock. Plants should not be roughly handled and, if necessary, must be well watered or “heeled in” while awaiting final planting.

Initial stocking densities should be at least 2500 stems per hectare for quality hardwood production (3100 for oak and beech). Higher densities are beneficial and are commonly found on the Continent. Establishment at 1100-1600 stems per hectare is undesirable, as it will give rise to the need for expensive formative pruning later. In large areas of broadleaved planting it may be appropriate to restrict timber spacing to “cores” or “nuclei” which will be managed for timber production, while the remainder of the woodland is established at wider spacing and managed less intensively for biodiversity and amenity benefits.

The appropriate young growth tending and early thinning regimes for quality timber production differ between the hardwood species, depending largely on their relative shade tolerance. Appropriate control/ exclusion of herbivores and competitive weeds is essential until young trees reach a safe size – typically 7cm diameter. There is usually advantage to the early identification of potential final crop

trees (vigorous, straight and lightly-branched stems) and subsequent favouring of these through appropriate progressive thinning and in some cases formative pruning. Shade tolerant species such as beech can be kept at tighter spacing for longer than light demanders - ash and silver birch, for example.

Sources of information

1. See www.ashs.co.uk
2. See www.forestry.gov.uk and visit the Scotland Grants and Licences pages for RDC information.
3. See www.forestresearch.gov.uk and visit the 5. Ecological Site Classification (ESC) pages.
4. See www.bihip.org and download the recent policy briefing on the local origin issue.
5. See www.forestry.gov.uk and download “Seed Sources for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs in Scotland” from the Publications page.
6. See www.forestry.gov.uk/frm
7. See www.bihip.org
8. See www.forestry.gov.uk and visit the Contacts page for local Conservancy contact details.
9. See www.forestry.gov.uk and visit the Publications page. Also see establishment advice pages from Forest Research on www.forestresearch.gov.uk and publications from SAC via www.sac.ac.uk



Questions and Answers: Land Managers Options

Land Managers Options gives landowners some easy ways to access funding for woodland creation and management. Applications are made via the Single Application Form (IACS form), so these Q & A's may be of help. Answers have been provided by staff from RPID and the Forestry Commission to questions put by various agents and applicants.

Option 7 - Access for sustainable forest management

I Roading improvement costs are high. Is it possible to do all the work in one go but claim in tranches over more than one year?

A No. If you have completed all the work in one year then that is the only time you can claim for the costs.

Option 18 - Small scale woodland creation

I When is the grant paid?

A If you applied in May 2009 then you will be paid in Summer 2010.

2 Can you claim grant for trees already planted in the planting season that ends on May 15th 2009?

A No. The planting must be in the scheme year. For example 15 May 2009 to 15 May 2010, i.e. in the twelve months after you complete the SAF form which is the application for the grant.

3 Is there any limit to the total area that can be planted over a number of years?

A No, there is no limit that can be planted over a number of years. You can plant up to 2 ha from May 2009 to May 2010 then if you wanted to, another 2 ha from May 2010 to May 2011. However, this is small scale woodland creation and woods should not exceed 1 hectare, nor be extended by consecutive planting. There should be at least 15 metres between planting to qualify as a separate wood. The exception to this would be woods separated by a public road or river which may be less than 15 metres but there is a definitive physical separation.

4 Can you plant more than two hectares but only claim up to your entitlement limit? Could this additional area be claimed in a subsequent year?

A The limit for this option is 2 ha and this is all you can claim. The additional area cannot be claimed in a subsequent year as this option requires you to plant within the scheme year you are applying.

5 Can we use this option to plant up gaps and clearings within existing poorly stocked, open woodland or within scrub with a few scattered trees, subject to the minimum area of 0.1 ha in aggregate, i.e. 110 trees? Would it make any difference if the existing woodland consists of native woodland or non-native species?

In a forestry context this is enrichment planting rather than new planting and it is grant aided as a management operation.

A As far as I am aware this is aimed purely at creating blocks of new planting only and is not intended for enrichment planting of any sort.

Option 19 - Management of small woodlands

I Are you totally ineligible if you own more than 30ha or can you just apply for the first thirty?

A You are not eligible if your holding has more than 30 ha of woodland. You cannot apply for the first 30 ha.

2 If some woods are still within a grant scheme and are ineligible for that reason, does their area count towards the 30ha eligibility limit. For example, if I have 32 ha of woodland and 4 ha are still receiving SFGS grant, can I claim for the remaining 28 ha?

A The area in an existing grant scheme will count towards the 30 ha limit. In the example you use you will not be able to claim for the remaining 28 ha.

3 What period of time is meant by 'grant aid for maintenance'? Second instalment or ten years from planting?

A If you are receiving 'grant aid for maintenance' under any of the listed schemes, (WGS, SFGS) then you cannot claim for the same area of woodland under any of the options in the LMO.

This would be double funding. You must wait until the maintenance period for the scheme is finished before applying for funding for the area under LMO. Under SFGS and WGS, the grant aid requires that the trees be maintained for at least 10 years following the planting.

4 For how many years are woodlands planted under Option 18 ineligible for Option 19?
A 10 years.

5 Can you please advise if this option, in particular the Livestock Removal Payment, can be used to continue the Livestock Exclusion paid for under LEAP, ESA or LMCMS when these schemes expire? Or is the payment only for removal of livestock currently in the wood?

A For native woodlands, the livestock removal payment under Land Managers Options - option 19 (Management of small woodlands) can be used to continue livestock exclusion payments made under legacy schemes where that scheme is about to or has just expired.

Land Managers Options

The Land Managers Options part of Rural Development Contracts contains several options that are useful for woodland owners. A great benefit of this scheme is that it is very easy to apply. Applications are made via your IACS Single Application Form so the scheme is non-competitive and you can apply for an amount up to the unused part of your maximum allowance.

Option 5 - Management of tree stands for seed production

Stands of good quality timber and/or native species may be registered with the Forestry Commission as Seed Stands. This aims to improve the yield of good quality timber.

The payment is 50% of actual costs. The work supported can include removal of trees of poor form; thinning; brushing/clearing of access routes and preparatory work and documentation.

Option 6 - Modernisation through electronic data management for forestry

This option supports the purchase of specialist forestry equipment such as GPS mapping hardware and software; electronic callipers; GIS software and 'ruggedised' notebook PCs designed for data capture.

Payment is 40% of actual cost up to £1,000 annually. Equipment must be new and must be maintained for five years in good condition.

Option 7 - Access creation for sustainable forest management

This option supports the creation of new access routes into woodlands or the improvement of existing routes. It includes internal routes as well as access to the woods across other land. It also includes passing places and loading bays. In particular it also includes the construction of bellmouths, cattle grids and gates/security barriers. The Forestry Commission has published guidance on the specifications for forest roads – www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-57cfj

Generally roads created should be capable of carrying timber haulage vehicles, but for smaller woods the creation of lower specification forwarder/trailer routes is acceptable.

Grant is 50% of actual costs.

This is a very useful option which could be of interest to most woodland owners. It is only payable though on woods where access is needed for thinning or felling operations.

Option 18 - Small scale woodland creation

This option is ideal for those wishing to create small woodlands as it is far simpler than applying for woodland creation grants under Rural Priorities. Under this you can plant up to 2 hectares of woodland in any year,

Several rules apply but they are all quite straightforward. You must use native species – this can include Scots pine; individual woods must be

between 0.1 and 1.0 ha; trees must be protected from livestock rabbits and deer; they must be maintained until fully established; and you should consult with neighbours or the local authority if appropriate.

In particular you must not plant on or close to any archaeological site. If you already participate in an agri-environment scheme, such as RSS, your plan will tell you where these sites are. If not then you should contact the Regional Archaeologist, at your Local Authority, who will be able to advise you.

The design of the woodland is important and you should not just plant an assortment of trees at random. Species choice and structure should reflect your objectives, be they visual amenity, wildlife interest, cover for game birds or shelter. You should therefore obtain a copy of the booklet, 'The creation of small woodlands on farms', free of charge, from the Forestry Commission website – www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-6pwmvZ. This gives much useful information and guidance.

The grant is £2,500 per hectare and you must plant 1,100/ha for broadleaves or 2,500/ha for Scots pine. There is no additional payment for fencing. For broadleaves this equates to £2.27 per tree – more than ample to pay for the plant, stake and tree shelter plus maintenance. 1.2m tall shelters are a good option as they provide protection from rabbits, deer and voles; act as a greenhouse to boost initial growth and provide some protection from herbicide when weeding.

For small woods it is quite feasible to do the planting yourself and save the costs of employing contractors. It is important that you spot weed around the trees with a herbicide such as Roundup as soon as the vegetation starts to grow in the spring to get the trees off to a good start.

This option can only be used for new woods – you cannot use it to replant areas of felled woodland or to in-fill gaps within an existing wood.

Option 19 - Management of small woods

If you own less than 30 hectares of woodland in total this option pays an annual management grant of £28/ha for five years.

You have to prepare a brief management plan and carry out the work defined within that plan. The plan should briefly assess the woodland types; constraints and opportunities; woodland structure; woodland protection; threats and improvements; public access and the proposed work programme. This will be a combination of text and maps. Unlike the previous scheme there is no longer a grant for the preparation of the plan. All work must be in accordance with the UK Forest Standard.

In addition if you are excluding livestock there is a payment of £41 per hectare.

Two other options may also be of interest though they are not specifically aimed at woodland owners.

Option 20 – Improving access

This is about improving public access. The route should link to local networks and/or give access to points of attraction and/or meet a local need. The payment is 75% of actual costs and there is a limit of £150 for certain capital items such as bridges, culverts or boardwalks, for each item.

This is a five year payment and work must ensure that the paths are well drained; fit for purpose; free of obstructions; signposted and waymarked and regularly inspected.

Option 21 – Active management to improve the condition of sites of archaeological or historic interest

This option is about improving the condition of archaeological or historic sites. The work most likely to be of interest to woodland owners includes control of bracken and control of gorse, rhododendron, trees and scrub.

The payment is 100% of actual costs. It is worth noting that this option does not allow you to use fences though if necessary these could be funded under Rural Priorities. A consequence of this, possibly unintended, is that this option does not cover rabbit control.

Land Managers Options did not have a very high uptake last year but there is something in it for all woodland owners to consider.

Review of the forestry elements of the SRDP

Author: Jamie Farquhar, National Manager for Scotland, Confor.

In response to many concerns raised about the complexities of the SRDP, the environment minister Michael Russell, asked Confor, the representative body for the forest industries in the UK to convene a small working party to review the forestry and woodland elements of the SRDP. The report was very comprehensive and made over forty recommendations in response to the four objectives set for the working party to consider.

These were

- To decrease the time taken to prepare applications and
- to increase the flow of such applications,
- their chance of success and
- their speed of approval.

The Report was well received by the Minister and RPID and the FCS have responded positively. The eleven priority recommendations have nearly all been accepted, at least in part, and assessment of the other recommendations is underway. The complex structure of the scheme means that some of the resultant changes will take a while to filter through, but others, such as the removal of the 200ha upper limit on the Farmland Premium have already been implemented.

A copy of the report can be obtained from Confor's website at <http://www.confor.org.uk/Default.aspx?pid=191&id=0>



Changes to the SRDP

Author: Alex Morris, Forestry Commission Scotland.

A number of changes to the SRDP, and transitional arrangements from the SFGS, are in the pipeline and will be implemented over the coming months. Some of these are dependent on approval from the EC and modifications to the SRDP system design, which have an affect on the date of implementation.

1
Extended SFGS claim deadline. Due to the adverse weather conditions, the deadline for making SFGS grant claims with a 2008-2009 claim year has been extended to **30th June 2009**.

This deadline applies to all first instalment claims for new planting and restocking (including ground protection and ground preparation). Also included are stewardship and WIAT claims but only where it can be shown that the capital works being claimed have been affected by the weather conditions.

It is **essential** that you make interim claims for any currently completed work **by 28th February 2009**.

Claims will be paid at SFGS rates **until 30th June 2009**. After this date you will not be able to claim grant under SFGS for any work with a 2008-09 claim year. If you wish to claim grant for any uncompleted work you must make an application under Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities. Once you get an approved contract, you can start the work and subsequently claim the grant.

2
Woodland Improvement Grant payment rates have, in most cases, been increased from 1st February, following the correction to the rates of supports in the recently amended SRDP. Most will now be at 100% of the standard costs, having previously been at 70% of the standard costs. This affects payments for long term forest planning (which now has

minimum and maximum payments), reducing deer impact, improving woodland habitats and species and improving non-woodland habitats. Additional operations are also now supported under the latter two options and the restructuring regeneration rate for Caledonian Scots Pine has also been increase to the same rate as native broadleaves.

3
Woodland Creation now includes support for three additional fencing Capital Items:
- Upgrading stock to deer fence
- Rabbit proofing of existing or new stock/deer fence
- Conversion of deer fence to stock fence (in black grouse & capercaillie core areas)

4
The upper limit of 200ha for Farmland Premium has now been removed.

5
A further amendment to the SRDP has been submitted to the EC and if approved will permit increasing the rate of support for woodland creation in LFA from the current 70% to 80% of the standard costs. This would effectively increase the initial planting payment in LFA by 14%. The amendment also proposes increasing all the maintenance payments from the current 70% to 100% of the standard costs. If approved, this would effectively increase the maintenance payments by 42%. We cannot give a date for any implementation as it depends on receipt of EC and subsequent Scottish Parliament approvals. **It should be noted that the rates that will be paid to applicants, will be the rates in their approved contract.**

6
A review of the standard costs of Capital Items in the SRDP is being undertaken to assess the effects of changes in both labour and material costs since the date of the original calculations. Any changes to the rates for Capital Items would need to be submitted to the EC for approval before such could be implemented. Consequently, it may be late 2009 or early 2010 before any required changes come into affect.,

Conservation Advice for Woodland Grouse

Author: Tim Poole, RSPB

The black grouse and capercaillie have been identified as species of conservation concern in the UK. Both species have been selected in SNH's Species Action Framework, Forestry Commission's Scottish Forestry Strategy and the Scottish Government's Rural Development Priorities. Specialist advice is available for both species.

Capercaillie advisory work is carried out by Tim Poole, Capercaillie Project Officer, funded by RSPB, SNH and Forestry Commission. Capercaillie are species of forests; both semi-natural and plantations. Plantations with Scots pine, larch and even Sitka spruce have become increasingly important for capercaillie. Tim is available to give free specialist advice across the capercaillie core range including site-specific management reports and identifying options for funding under SRDP and Species Action Framework.

Black grouse advisory work in the Highland Council region is carried out by Adam Fraser, Black Grouse Officer for RSPB North Scotland. The black grouse is a species of forest edges, bogs and open moorland, often favouring areas of tree regeneration. Adam

will be happy to speak to anyone interested in black grouse management and advise them on specific management requirements and SRDP funding.

Collaborative schemes are increasingly favoured by public funding bodies and SRDP is no different. Rural Priority 12 prioritises increasing the connectivity of habitats and natural features 'through collaboration between land managers to adopt a landscape scale, whole ecosystem approach to helping biodiversity'. Adam and Tim have been integral in setting up the Nairnshire Woodland Grouse Group, bringing together a number of estates in rural Nairnshire to collaborate on plans to improve habitat and increase protection for capercaillie and black grouse across the landscape. This sharing of experiences and willingness to work together will hopefully prove beneficial in promoting and augmenting the populations of both species in rural Nairnshire.

Contact timothy.poole@rspb.org.uk and adam.fraser@rspb.org.uk or 01463715000 for more information on advisory services for capercaillie and black grouse. RSPB also offers a free advisory service for black grouse in other regions. For those interested in this, please contact Adam for further contact details.



