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Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

# Woodland Creation Planning Scheme (February 2024): rules booklet

Follow these rules and guidance for the Woodland Creation Planning Scheme (February 2024).

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# Introduction: supporting the rural economy and the transition to the Sustainable Farming Scheme

The Programme for Government sets out our commitments to continue supporting landowners and land managers including farmers to produce food and fibre in a sustainable way, whilst taking action to respond to the climate emergency and to help reverse the decline in biodiversity. Funding support for farmers, land managers and associated rural sectors is delivered through a flexible framework of support, with schemes – including the *Woodland Creation Planning Scheme*- delivering towards the following themes

- farm scale land management
- on farm environmental improvements
- on farm efficiency and diversification
- landscape scale land management
- woodland and forestry
- food and farming supply chains

The framework is designed to both support action in response to the challenges and opportunities available and to inform the continuing development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme, which will reward farmers for the work they do now to lower their carbon footprint, improve the environment and produce food in a sustainable way.

Further information on the themes and schemes being developed are available at: **Wales Rural Network (on Business Wales)** (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/>).

## Key messages

The Woodland Creation Planning scheme (WCPS) offers grants of between

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£1,000 and £5,000 to develop plans for new woodland creation.

You must use a Registered Woodland Planner (RWP) to develop a woodland creation plan.

The woodland creation funding will help farmers transition to the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) and there will be no disadvantage in terms of SFS eligibility for undertaking the planting prior to the start of the scheme.

Plans must be verified by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to make sure they meet the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and the scheme rules. After a plan has been successfully verified, it will be eligible for the **Woodland Creation Grant** (<https://www.gov.wales/woodland-creation-grant>).

You must get a mandatory NRW pre-application assessment before you submit a WCPS EoI.

Your Expression of Interest (EoI) must be for a woodland plan of at least 0.25 Hectares in size. If you want to plant less than 2 hectares in an agriculturally improved or in a low environmental value area, you may be eligible to apply for the **Small Grants – Woodland Creation scheme** (<https://www.gov.wales/small-grants-woodland-creation>).

After a plan has been verified, it will be eligible to apply for the Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) funding for five years from the date of verification. This will allow a land manager to apply for future funding to create the woodland without needing further verification if the woodland creation plan is not altered. There will be WCG windows opening regularly from then onwards, subject to budget availability.

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# Overview of the Woodland Creation Planning Scheme process

## 1. Pre-application advice

Mandatory pre-application requests must be made to [gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk) (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk>) by any interested parties. The NRW Woodland Programme Team aim to provide a response to any pre-application requests within 28 days.

## 2. Expression of interest (EoI)

On completion of a pre-application assessment, including requested surveys, you can submit an EoI through Rural Payments Wales (RPW online). Your EOI must be for a woodland plan of at least 0.25 Hectares in size. If you want to plant less than 2 hectares in an agriculturally improved or in a low environmental value area, you may be eligible to apply for the **Small Grants – Woodland Creation scheme** (<https://www.gov.wales/small-grants-woodland-creation>).

## 3. Plan

The WCPS provides funding to use a RWP to develop a woodland creation plan using a woodland creation template. Incorporate the pre-application advice from NRW. Additional information needs to be included if an Environment Impact Assessment is required, and this will be agreed in a mandatory pre-application discussion with NRW

## 4. Verification

Plans must be verified by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to make sure they meet the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and the scheme rules. After a plan has been successfully verified, it will be eligible for the **Woodland Creation Grant** (<https://www.gov.wales/woodland-creation-grant>).

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## Section A: introduction

As part of our plan to tackle the climate emergency, Wales needs to plant 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. To help achieve this, the Welsh Government introduced the WCPS.

The WCPS is available throughout the year and offers grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to develop plans for new woodland creation.

Separate funding via WCG offers funding for tree planting, fencing and gates to farmers and land managers once you have an approved woodland creation plan . and The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG) offers additional funding for potential National Forest sites.

Below is a step-by-step process for the new offer:

- there will be a mandatory pre-application discussion between NRW and an interested party about the woodland creation proposal before the EoI is submitted
- any eligible landowner or land manager in Wales can apply to the scheme using RPW Online. You may choose to ask a RWP to apply on your behalf
- plans will be selected based on Woodland Opportunities Map scoring successful applicants
- applicants must use a RWP to complete a Woodland Creation Plan, which will be sent to NRW for verification to ensure it is in line with the UKFS
- once a plan has been successfully verified, land managers will be eligible to apply for Welsh Government Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) funding for 5 years from the date of verification
- land managers will receive a payment of up to £5,000, based on the area of the plan. No payment will be made for plans which are not verified, although support will still be available for surveys which were required
- verified plans which meet one of the woodland categories supported will be

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eligible to apply for the WCG for tree planting

- landowners or land managers will be responsible for informing RPW via their RPW Online account if they choose to plant the woodland without Welsh Government WCG funding

## Sustainable Farming Scheme

**The funding will help farmers transition to the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) as trees planted now will count towards the SFS universal action for tree cover on farms.** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) There will be no disadvantage in terms of SFS eligibility for undertaking the planting prior to the scheme starting.

## Section B: eligibility

To be eligible for the Woodland Creation planning scheme:

- you must have registered as a customer with RPW and have been issued with a Customer Reference Number (CRN)
- you must be a public or private land holder, municipality or an association, including community groups planting on publicly owned land. You must have full management control of the land
- tenants must have management control of the land and have the landlord's agreement to enter the scheme
- landlords will be able to apply for the scheme if they can demonstrate that they retain full management control of the land. Landlords will not be able to apply for funding on any land that is or has been subject to dispute over tenancies within the last 12 months
- you must have full management control of the land and retain management control until the claim is paid. You must have registered your land with the

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RPW Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) and have full management control of that land when you submit your application. You do not need to be a farmer to do this

- Government Departments or their agents are not eligible for funding

## Eligibility requirements

Eligible land must:

- be registered with the RPW Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS)
- be made up of field parcels that are 0.1ha or greater in area and located in Wales – the term field parcel does not mean that it must be agricultural land
- not be existing woodland, this includes areas shown on Forest Research's National Forest Inventory - **National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (on [datamap.gov.wales](https://datamap.gov.wales))** ([https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW\\_NIWT](https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_NIWT))
- if the land is registered common land, either consent must be granted under section 38 of the Commons Act 2006 or written confirmation provided that consent under section 38 is not required by Welsh Ministers before submitting an EoI. Where consent is required, an approved Section 38 consent is required before submitting a WCG EoI

## Section C: available grants

### Woodland Creation plan

A minimum £1,000 grant will be paid for each completed Woodland Creation Plan. For areas of woodland over 20 hectares, £50 per whole hectare will be paid, up to a maximum of £5,000 per plan, to include any specialist surveys. For example, a plan of 15 hectares would receive a payment of £1,000, and a plan of 35.5 hectares would receive a payment of £1,750 (£1,000 + (15 x £50)).

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The plan needs to be successfully verified by NRW before payment can be claimed.

If the plan is not successfully verified, no payment will be made, although support for specialist surveys can still be claimed. The eligible area for payment will be the final plan area, as verified by NRW. This may differ from the area submitted in the EoI if changes take place during verification. Areas of open space greater than 0.5 hectare must not be included when calculating the area of the woodland.

**You need to apply for one or more of the woodland categories in Table 1 for the woodland creation plan. In future, the Welsh Government may choose to change the woodland categories, but we will ensure that plans verified before categories are changed are still eligible to apply for funding.** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) Applicants may choose to complete a plan which does not fall into one of these woodland creation categories but may be ineligible for the future woodland creation funding.

Detailed in the table below are the woodland categories eligible for the Woodland Creation Grant and the grant values if you apply and are selected for the scheme.

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## Table 1: Capital and area payments per woodland category

Woodland category	Capital works number	Specification	New planting payment per hectare (£)
<b>Enhanced Mixed Woodland</b>	P004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 5 major species (at least 10% of each)</li> <li>• Minimum of 25% broadleaves inclusive of woody shrub element or 30% if the planting area is below the upper limit of enclosure and larger than 30 hectares</li> <li>• Maximum 10% woody shrub element</li> <li>• No more than 50% of a single species</li> <li>• Stocking density 2,500/ha</li> <li>• Exclude livestock</li> </ul>	5,146
<b>Native Woodland - Carbon</b>	P003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native species mixture</li> <li>• Maximum 30% woody shrubs allowed</li> <li>• Stocking density 2,500/ha</li> <li>• Exclude Livestock</li> </ul>	6,170
<b>Native Woodland – Biodiversity (1,600)</b>	P002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native species - mix should be site native and largely conform to Habitat Action Plan types (for example upland oak, lowland mixed deciduous woods), however, local conditions may necessitate some variation from these.</li> <li>• Suitable provenance planting stock</li> <li>• Maximum 30% woody shrubs allowed</li> <li>• Clumped distribution of species with variable</li> </ul>	4,550

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Woodland category	Capital works number	Specification	New planting payment per hectare (£)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spacing</li> <li>• Stocking density 1,600/ha</li> <li>• Exclude Livestock</li> </ul>	
<b>Native Woodland – Biodiversity (1,100)</b>	P005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native species - mix should be site native and largely conform to Habitat Action Plan types (for example upland oak, lowland mixed deciduous woods), however, local conditions may necessitate some variation from these.</li> <li>• Suitable provenance planting stock</li> <li>• Maximum 30% woody shrubs allowed</li> <li>• Clumped distribution of species with variable spacing</li> <li>• Stocking density 1,100/ha</li> <li>• Exclude Livestock</li> </ul>	3,302
<b>Agroforestry - scattered trees</b>	P001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 trees per hectare</li> <li>• Individual tree fencing</li> <li>• Not eligible for Premium payment</li> </ul>	1,600

**Table 2: Payment for additional capital works**

Additional capital works	Capital works number	Specification	Payment per item
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<b>Post &amp; Wire Fencing with Netting</b>	P595	Post and wire fencing and stock netting	8.32
<b>Deer Fencing</b>	P518	Fencing to protect from deer browsing	11.93
<b>Standard gate (Metal)</b>	P590		£221.00
<b>Standard gate (Hardwood)</b>	P599		£669.41
<b>Standard gate (Softwood)</b>	P600		291.75
<b>Timber Bridle Gate and Posts</b>	P516	Bridle gates to allow access for walkers and horse riders along public rights of way. Compliant with BS5709.	220.83
<b>Timber Kissing Gate and Posts</b>	P517	Kissing gates to allow walkers to cross field boundaries along public rights of way. Compliant with BS 5709.	237.80

## 12 year annual area payment

The premium for the 12 years annual area payment is £350 per hectare (not including agroforestry).

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## Maintenance rates for 12 years (payment per hectare)

The maintenance rate per hectare (not including agroforestry) for year 1 is £400, year 2 is £300 and year 3 is £250. The rate per year from year 4 to year 12 is £70. The rate for agroforestry is £30 (5 years only).

The Maintenance payment is available to maintain new planting for the duration of the contractual period - see Table above. This is front loaded in recognition of the higher costs in the early years after planting to provide the funding when needed. A payment for the Agroforestry category is for 5 years (£30/ha/year) and is not available on publicly owned land.

## Specialist surveys

If NRW advise a specialist habitat or species survey is required as part of their pre-application advice, you can claim 80% of the cost of this survey in addition to your claim for support for the plan. For surveys with a total cost of less than £5,000 you will be required to submit one quote. For any surveys with a total invoiced cost of between £5,000 and £24,999 you will be required to submit three quotes for the survey to demonstrate value for money. Payment will be based on 80% of the lowest quote. Types of specialist surveys which can be funded include:

- bat and butterfly peat
- breeding birds
- vegetation / habitats
- archaeology

The maximum grant that can be claimed (including any specialist survey) is £5,000. If the specialist survey finds that no part of the scheme can be planted, a WCPS EoI must still be submitted. Once this has been completed, Welsh

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Government can pay for the specialist survey.

Information contained in survey data for the WCPS may be retained by NRW or Welsh Government to update its environmental knowledge base.

## Other schemes and sources of funding

When applying for funding for your woodland creation plan you will need to consider whether you would be eligible to receive funding for future tree planting through WCG.

### Habitat Wales Scheme

Land entered into a Habitat Wales scheme agreement, either in a habitat classification or Permanent Grassland to be managed as habitat, may be eligible to receive funding for tree planting through the WCG.

The land will be removed from the Habitat Wales Scheme agreement and claim before a WCG contract is issued. No payment will be made on this land under the Habitat Wales Scheme.

### Organic Conversion Scheme (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

Where land is under a - Organic Conversion Scheme contract, you must request the removal of the land from your Organic Conversion Scheme contract via your RPW online account if you want to plant trees. Subject to approval from the Welsh Government, the land will be removed from the Organic Conversion Scheme contract and planting can only commence after the removal has taken place.

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## Organic Support

Where land is included in a 2024 Organic Support claim you must request the removal of the land from your Organic Support claim via your RPW Online account if you want to plant trees. Subject to approval from the Welsh Government, the land will be removed from your claim. Planting can only commence after the removal has taken place.

## Growing for the Environment

Where land is under a Growing for the Environment contract, it may be entered into a Woodland Creation Grant contract. However, applicants must request the removal of the land from their Growing for the Environment contract via their RPW online account. Subject to approval from the Welsh Government, the land will be removed from the Growing for the Environment contract and planting can only commence after the removal has taken place.

## Previously funded Capital Works

If the tree planting and fencing Capital Works has previously been funded under any of the schemes below, it is ineligible for the Woodland Creation Planning Scheme:

- Sustainable Management Scheme
- all Glastir schemes
- Small Grants - Environment

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## Section D: before you apply

### Check your land is suitable for woodland creation

Before applying, we recommend checking the suitability of your land for tree planting through the Woodland Opportunities Map. This shows any constraints or sensitivities connected with a new planting site and is available here: [Woodland Opportunities Map \(on datamap.gov.wales\)](https://datamap.gov.wales) (<https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/woodland-opportunity-map-2021/view>). Sensitivities do not always mean tree planting is not possible but do mean there are additional factors which need to be considered or consulted on. While the map cannot be definitive, it is helpful to indicate areas where there are likely to be sensitivities so you can consider and address these at the start of your planning.

We would also recommend speaking to a registered woodland planner, who can advise on the appropriate size, location and planting option for your proposals. A list of registered woodland planners can be found at [Registered woodland planners: contact details](https://www.gov.wales/glastir-woodland-planners-contact-details) (<https://www.gov.wales/glastir-woodland-planners-contact-details>).

There will be a woodland plan template for Registered Planners to complete. If your scheme requires an Environmental Impact Assessment opinion, you will be asked for additional information.

### Obtain pre-application advice

Pre-application discussion with the NRW is a mandatory part of the process. Free pre-application requests can be made to [GwirioCynllunCoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:GwirioCynllunCoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk) (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:GwirioCynllunCoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk>) by any i

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interested parties. The NRW Woodland Programme Team aim to provide a 28-day response for pre-application requests. If a site visit is required, there will be a 28 day response from the date of the visit.

**Pre-application advice must have been provided, and any identified surveys completed, prior to the submission of an Eol.**

(<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

## Section E: how to apply

The Eol for the WCPS is available via RPW Online. If you are not already registered, further detail is included below on how to register.

### Submitting an Eol

You must complete an Eol for the WCPS via your RPW online account. If you already have a Customer Reference Number (CRN) you should have received a letter informing you of your Activation Code to set up your account. If you no longer have this, please telephone the Customer Contact Centre on 0300 062 5004 and tell the operator your CRN. Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh. They will send you a new Activation Code.

To register your business details for the first time, you need to complete the online registration form. Please refer to the how to register guidance for further details **RPW Online: using 'manage my land'** (<https://www.gov.wales/rpw-online-using-manage-my-land>). The vast majority of changes to business details can be done online. However, the Welsh Government may require further details on any major changes. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre for further information.

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Once registered, you can access your RPW Online account. The WCPS Eol is available from the “Applications and Claims” section of your account.

Agents acting on your behalf will need to register as a Rural Payments Wales agent. If you have yet to do this you are advised to complete an online or paper copy Agent / Farming Union Customer Details (Wales) form immediately. The form is available on the Welsh Government website. Upon receipt of the form, we will send you an Agent Customer Reference Number (Agent CRN) and an RPW Online Activation Code. You will also need to complete an Association Authorisation Form which can be completed once you register with RPW Online, please refer to our how to register guidance.

If you have any questions about registering for RPW Online or completing your Eol, please contact the Customer Contact Centre on 0300 062 5004. Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh. They will be able to provide advice, including the digital assistance that is available to you.

Further details regarding RPW Online are available on the Welsh Government Website.

## Selection process

The Welsh Government will score Eols monthly. If there is not enough budget to offer funding to every Eol, the Eols which score the highest will be offered funding. This is the same approach which will be taken for allocating funding for woodland creation. There is no minimum score to receive funding, as even areas outside of high scoring areas are likely to contain suitable sites for woodland creation which will provide public benefits. If your Eol is not selected, we will keep it under consideration for future funding unless you choose to withdraw it.

The score is calculated based on the field parcel boundaries included in your Eol

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and a number of data layers which score each area of Wales based on the potential of woodlands to provide benefits to the public, such as capturing carbon, preventing flooding and improving air quality. You can find these data layers in [Woodland Opportunities Map \(on datamap.gov.wales\)](https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/woodland-opportunity-map-2021/view) (<https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/woodland-opportunity-map-2021/view>) and check how your Eol is likely to score.

Once selection has taken place, a message will be sent to your RPW online account confirming whether you have been selected. If your Eol is selected, you will be invited to submit a Woodland Creation Plan for verification.

If you have not been successful, we will explain the reason on your RPW online account. In the event of the available budget being exceeded, the highest scoring projects will be selected. Further information on the scoring process is available at [Woodland Creation Plan Scheme](https://www.gov.wales/woodland-creation-plan-scheme) (<https://www.gov.wales/woodland-creation-plan-scheme>).

## Section F: submitting the Woodland Creation Plan

If you have been successful, and if you have not already done so, you will need to engage a registered woodland planner to complete a Woodland Creation Plan. A list of registered woodland planners can be found at [Registered woodland planners: contact details](https://www.gov.wales/glastir-woodland-planners-contact-details) (<https://www.gov.wales/glastir-woodland-planners-contact-details>).

The woodland planner will write a Woodland Creation Plan which sets out the proposal for the new woodland and how it will be implemented in line with UKFS, scheme rules and the pre-application advice received from NRW. The plan must be submitted within 12 weeks of confirmation that your Eol has been successful.

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Requests for extensions to the submission deadline can only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. **If there is a valid reason why a plan cannot be completed within the 12 week** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) period, you must request an extension in writing via your RPW Online account before the submission deadline. If you do not submit your plan and have not requested an extension with RPW within the 12 weeks, your selection will be withdrawn and you will need to wait 12 months from the withdrawal date before making a further application.

Included in your selection correspondence will be a shapefile which includes the land parcels validated in your EoI which your registered planner will need to use in compiling your plan.

The shapefile will need to be amended with your planting, fencing, gate and open ground by your registered planner via their Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The updated shapefile will need to be returned to the Welsh Government via your RPW Online account alongside the completed plan and all other supporting documentation.

The woodland creation plan templates and guidance and mapping guidance will be available on RPW online. We are unable to accept alternative plan templates and maps which, if submitted, will render your EoI ineligible.

Your fully completed plan and shapefile must be submitted to Welsh Government via your RPW Online account. Your plan will then be sent to NRW to complete verification to ensure it meets the UKFS and scheme rules. You can find more detail about this below.

Prior to submission, you, or an authorised agent acting on your behalf, and your Registered Woodland Planner must sign the completed plan. When signing your plan declaration, you must ensure the plan is fully completed in all respects and accurately reflects your intended planting proposals. Failure to meet these requirements could result in the plan being rejected by the Welsh Government.

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## Minimum size of new planting

The minimum area of new planting to be eligible for support is 0.25 hectares. The new planting must be fenced and the design of the woodland must be consistent with UKFS and scheme rules. There is no limit on the maximum size.

You are not able to submit two EOIs for the same land holding per calendar year, so applications should use all of the areas on your land which you wish to plant.

You are not required to apply for funding to plant the whole woodland plan at the same time, so are able to stagger it over time if you wish (provided each area meets the scheme requirements).

## Agroforestry Grant (80 trees/Hectare)

The agroforestry option provides for establishing 80 scattered trees per hectare on permanent grassland which is also grazed at least to typical stocking levels for the land in question throughout the period of the contract.

The grant rate shown is based on planting, individually fencing trees using parkland tree guards, protecting the required number of individual trees and maintaining these so that they become fully established. Agricultural activity will be maintained on the area for the full contract period.

An annual Maintenance payment can be claimed for the first five years. Premium payment is not payable on these areas, because they will remain in agricultural production.

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## Hedgerows

Applicants can apply to plant a hedge to border the woodland as part of their woodland creation project. The woodland creation plan must explain the objectives for planting and managing the hedge. The hedge needs to meet the following specification:

- plant native trees and shrubs in a mix of at least three hedging species, with no one component of the mix comprising more than 65% of the total. Must not include any ash trees as part of any planting mix due to ash dieback disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxinea*)
- plant new hedgerows at a density of 7 plants per metre in a staggered double row, with 20cm between each row

The area covered by the hedgerow will receive the same payment rate as the rest of the woodland. Trees and shrubs planted in the hedgerow will not affect the specification required in the rest of the woodland (i.e. they should not be included in calculations of stocking density, tree species percentage or woody shrubs). The hedge line must be part of the WCPS woodland creation scheme. Funding which is solely for hedges is available through the **Small Grants – Environment** (<https://www.gov.wales/small-grants-environment>) scheme.

## Fencing

**To be eligible for grant funding, the location of fencing capital works must be no more than 10m from the tree planting boundary. The** (<https://www.gov.walesnull>) length of the fencing line must not exceed the perimeter of the associated planting polygon. The area of woodland creation must be stock proof.

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## Gates

You may choose to include a standard gate (metal or wooden) to enable access to maintain the woodland creation area and for gates (self closing wicket gates) for public and permissive rights of way. These may be included in the contract Capital Works.

## Open space

Scattered, unplantable open ground can be included within the planting area up to a total of 15% of the total area and individual blocks of unplantable open ground can be up to 0.5ha. Individual areas of open ground over 0.5ha must be excluded from the planting scheme. You will need to alter the tree spacing in parts of the site to account for un-plantable ground to ensure the required number of trees in the contract are planted (see Table 3).

**Table 3 - Spacing distances for varying percentages of open space stocking density of 2,500 stems per hectare (Native Carbon mixture and Enhanced Mixed woodland)**

Percentage of open space	Spacing metre x metre	Stems per hectare in net area
0%	2.00	2,500
5%	1.95	2,631
10%	1.90	2,777
15%	1.84	2,941

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Stocking density for Native Biodiversity – 1,600 stems/Hectare and Native Biodiversity – 1,100 stems/Hectare can be grouped at closer spacing to allow for open ground.

## Existing scattered trees and shrubs

Existing scattered trees and shrubs have a high environmental value and should not be cleared for new planting but should be incorporated into the planting design. Woody shrubs and scattered trees need to be mapped out if the area is more than 0.5ha.

## Section G: NRW verification

NRW will check that the Woodland Creation Plan complies with the UK Forestry Standard and scheme rules. If the Woodland Creation Plan does not meet these requirements, NRW will return it to the registered planner for changes. Failure to respond to NRW verification comments within a reasonable timescale could lead to your plan being returned unverified.

## UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)

The UK Forestry Standard is the UK's standard for sustainable forestry. Detail about it can be found on the Forest Research website: [The UK Forestry Standard \(on gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>).

Some areas of Wales contain sensitivities which require special consideration and consultation when designing Woodland Creation Plans. NRW guidance for woodland planners on these can be found here: [Get help to plan your](#)

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**woodland on Natural Resources Wales** (<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/woodlands-and-forests/get-help-to-plan-your-woodland>). In verifying plans, NRW are required to meet their Sustainable Management of Natural Resources objective. The Welsh Government has provided guidance on how this applies to woodland, which can be found here: **Woodland creation: evidencing delivery of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources** (<https://www.gov.wales/woodland-creation-evidencing-delivery-sustainable-management-natural-resources>).

There should be no planting of larch, ash or other species at immediate risk of disease within the plan.

The plan must not involve the growing of Christmas trees or a short rotation biomass crop. Christmas trees may not be used as a nurse crop. Short rotation means less than 8 years.

## Consultation

The UKFS sets out that statutory and public consultation is an important aspect of woodland creation proposals.

The Welsh Government requires consultation with a number of mandatory consultees, if a sensitivity falls within or adjacent to the proposed woodland creation area. The woodland planner will be required to provide responses from mandatory consultees as part of the plan (or evidence that they have not responded within 28 days).

Planners will also need to provide consent from relevant organisations when planting within a designated site, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or near a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). You may also need to obtain other consents if your planting proposal has a potential impact on a feature such as a protected species or water body. NRW Guidance note GN002

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provides information and advice on who and at which stage of the process this should be carried out.

Contacting interested neighbours at an early stage of the woodland creation planning process is an opportunity to provide information on the proposal and avoid potential conflicts. This should include consultation with any individuals whose properties adjoin the new planting. A public participation event is recommended for woodland creation schemes, especially schemes located close to a community.

If the woodland creation scheme is over 5Ha you or the woodland planner must inform the Community or Parish Council at the earliest opportunity for about your woodland scheme at the earliest opportunity. It is also recommended you also consult with interested parties e.g. local angling associations and 'friends of' community groups. Erecting posters at key access points or in local shops/post offices is another effective way of demonstrating public engagement.

All public consultation must be completed before a plan is submitted. The Welsh Government and NRW will not consult third parties directly, except where outstanding public participation concerns could not be resolved. You, or the registered planner working on your behalf, must include a report on public participation alongside the plan. This should highlight when you or the woodland planner consulted with interested individuals or parties, how they were consulted (e.g. public event, flyers, door to door), how long the consultation ran and who responded. NRW must be provided with evidence that a reasonable and proportionate attempt has been made to contact relevant individuals, such as sending a letter and allowing 28 days for response.

Where interested party concerns cannot be addressed prior to submission, they should still be submitted with the plan, along with the reasons for being unable to address them. As part of the verification process, NRW will consider the concerns and will, possibly in discussion with others, advise whether the concern is valid or not.

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## Landscape design plan

Any Woodland Creation Plan over 5Ha which is not 100% native species, will be required to submit a Landscape Design map showing the distribution of species across the site, as part of their submission.

## Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment

### Environment Impact Assessment

**The Environment Impact Assessment (Forestry) regulations (on Natural Resources Wales)** (<https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/tree-felling-and-other-regulations/environmental-impact-assessment-for-forestry-activity/planning-my-forestry-project/?lang=en>) will be assessed as part of the NRW Woodland Programme verification process. 1 in 20 woodland creation schemes will be submitted to the NRW Forest Permitting team for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) opinion to ensure consistency of approach.

Any breach of Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations between the submission of the EoI and contract start may result in the offer of a contract being withdrawn. Any environmental damage may also be referred to the relevant authority in cases of suspected breaches of regulations.

### Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Any proposals that have the potential to impact on a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) will be subject to the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which

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means that a HRA will be required. NRW will advise you if your case is likely to require a HRA as part of verification, and additional information is likely to be requested in order to support NRW in completing a shadow HRA on behalf of Welsh Government.

If an EIA opinion and HRA is required, Woodland Creation Plan verification will be completed once these assessments have been received and any recommendations addressed in the Plan and maps.

## Variations of rules (<https://www.gov.walesnull>)

There may be occasions where there are good environmental and forestry reasons for taking an alternative approach to standard rules. In these cases, the intention to take an alternative approach must be clearly recorded on the woodland plan so it can be verified by NRW as being justified as sustainable forestry practice.

Once your plan has been verified by NRW and verification approved by Welsh Government you will be eligible to apply for WCG for 5 years without further verification unless there are changes to the plan.

If a Woodland Creation Plan is not verified, it will be returned to RPW to reject and the applicant may be excluded from the WCPS for two years.

## Section H: claiming

### Woodland Creation Plan

Once your Woodland Creation Plan is successfully verified by NRW, the verified plan will be sent to you via your RPW online account. A claim form will be sent

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to you via your RPW online account to complete. Once received, your claim will be validated and processed and, if eligible, payment will be processed and issued via BACS.

Payment will only be made if the completed plan has been successfully verified by NRW. The amount paid will be based on the final area of woodland in the plan after verification has taken place.

## Specialist survey

All claims for specialist surveys will need to be accompanied by an invoice and bank statement to provide evidence of defrayment.

If a specialist survey required by NRW finds that no part of the scheme can be planted, a WCPS EoI must still be submitted. Once this has been completed, Welsh Government can pay for the specialist survey.

## Section I: evaluation and record keeping

You must keep all records and information you need to evidence that you have provided complete and accurate information.

Following the sale or transfer of land that forms part of the verified plan, for planting to take place by the new occupier, the Welsh Government must be informed prior to an application for planting costs being made. The Welsh Government are not able to share a copy of the woodland plan with a land manager who is not the original applicant.

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## Section J: appeals

There are no grounds for appeal if your EoI is not selected.

The appeals process consists of two stages:

- stage 1: review by RPW
- stage 2: review by an Independent Appeals Panel (if you are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response)

The independent panel makes recommendations to the Welsh Ministers, who take the final decision, which concludes the process.

There is no charge for Stage 1 of the process, but there is a charge at Stage 2 – £50 for a written hearing or £100 for an oral hearing. These charges are repaid in full if the Stage 2 appeal is either partially or fully successful.

Appeals, including supporting evidence, must be submitted via RPW Online within 60 days of the date of the letter outlining the decision you wish to appeal against.

We welcome receiving appeals in Welsh and will respond to any correspondence in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in processing your appeal.

Further details of the appeals process and how to submit an appeal, using the online appeal form, can be obtained from the Customer Contact Centre or our website at **Rural Grants and Payments appeals: guidance** (<http://www.gov.wales/rural-grants-and-payments-appeals-guidance>).

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## Section K: complaints

Complaints will be dealt with under the Welsh Government's procedure on Complaints. Further advice on how to make a complaint can be obtained from the Complaints Advice Team:

Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

Tel: 03000 251378

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh.

E-mail: [complaints@gov.wales](mailto:complaints@gov.wales)

(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:complaints@gov.wales>)

Website: [Complaints about Welsh Government](https://www.gov.wales/complaints-about-welsh-government) (<https://www.gov.wales/complaints-about-welsh-government>)

You may also choose to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae  
Pencoed  
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Website: [www.ombudsman.wales](https://www.ombudsman.wales/?emergency=1) (<https://www.ombudsman.wales/?emergency=1>)

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# Section L: privacy notice - Welsh Government grants

## How we will handle any personal data you provide in relation to your grant application or request for grant funding

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide in relation to your grant application or request for grant funding. The information will be processed as part of our public task (i.e. exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government) and will help us assess your eligibility for funding.

Before we provide grant funding to you, we undertake checks for the purposes of preventing fraud and money laundering, and to verify your identity. These checks require us to process personal data about you to third party fraud prevention agencies.

If we, or a fraud prevention agency, determine that you pose a fraud or money laundering risk, we may refuse to provide the grant funding you applied for, or we may stop providing existing grant funding to you.

A record of any fraud or money laundering risk will be retained by the fraud prevention agencies, and may result in others refusing to provide services, financing or employment to you.

In order to assess eligibility we may also need to share personal information relating to your application with Regulatory authorities, such as Natural Resources Wales, HM Revenue and Customs, Local Authorities, Health and Safety Executive and the Police.

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Your information, including your personal information, may be the subject of a request by another member of the public. When responding to such requests the Welsh Government may be required to release information, including your personal information, to fulfil its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental information Act 2004 or the Data Protection Act 2018.

We will keep personal information contained in files in line with our retention policy. If successful in your application then your personal data will be kept for 10 years from the conclusion of any aid award. If you are unsuccessful, your details will be kept for one year after the date you provided them.

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to access the personal data the Welsh Government holds on you
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is the independent regulator for data protection

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:

Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3NQ

Email: [dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales](mailto:dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales)

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(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales>)

Contact details for the **Information Commissioner's Office**

(<https://www.ico.org.uk/>):

Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

If you have any queries regarding this privacy statement please contact the RPW Customer Contact Centre.

## Section M: legislation

The WCPS delivers against a range of Government commitments and objectives, these are listed below along with the legislation and governance that applies.

The WCPS is governed by Retained EU Law (now known as 'Assimilated Law' Council Regulations No. 1305/2013, 1303/2013 and 1306/2013, Implementing Regulation No. 808/2014 and No. 809/2014 and Delegated Regulation 640/2014 and 807/2014 (all as amended from time to time).

The Assimilated Law is implemented in Wales through the following domestic law (all as amended from time to time), including by the Agricultural Support (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021/400 (W.129):

- the Rural Development Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2014/3222

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(W.327)

- the Common Agricultural Policy (Integrated Administration and Control System and Enforcement and Cross Compliance) (Wales) Regulations 2014/3223 (W.328)

The WCPS is available to land managers and farming businesses across Wales and aims to deliver to the Welsh Government's four strategic objectives, which are:

- fostering the competitiveness of agriculture
- contributing towards the sustainable management of natural resources as set out in Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- ensuring climate resilience
- achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment

There are three cross cutting objectives for The Woodland Creation Grant, which are:

- climate change mitigation and adaptation
- innovation
- environment

Activities will address at least one of the following Welsh Government priorities:

1. fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas;
2. enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests;
3. promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture;
4. restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture

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and forestry;

5. promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors;
6. promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

## World Trade Organisation and Subsidy Control

1. Subsidies provided under this scheme are considered to be payments under an environmental programme, which fall within the scope of Annex II of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and have been classified as 'green box.'
2. As such these subsidies are exempt from the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and the interim UK subsidy control regime.

## Section N: contact details

**Welsh Government's website** (<https://www.gov.wales/farming-countryside>) and monthly **Gwlad magazine** (<https://www.gov.wales/subscribe-farming-and-forestry-news-gwlad>) contain key information. Contact details are as follows:

### Rural Payments Wales

PO Box 251  
Caernarfon  
LL55 9DA

Tel: 0300 062 5004.

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Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh.

## Other useful contacts

### For general enquiries (EIA, SSSI, NNR, SAC or SPA)

#### Natural Resources Wales

c/o Customer Care Centre

Tŷ Cambria

29 Newport Rd

Cardiff

CF24 0TP

Tel: 0300 065 3000

### General NRW enquiries

0300 065 3000 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm)

[ymholiadau@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:ymholiadau@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:ymholiadau@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk>)

[enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk>)

### For NRW woodland verification queries

[gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:gwiriocynlluncoetir@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk>)

[woodlandplanverification@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:woodlandplanverification@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

(<https://www.gov.walesmailto:woodlandplanverification@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk>)

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## For Scheduled Monuments (SMs) / registered parks and gardens

Cadw  
Welsh Government,  
Plas Carew  
Unit 5/7 Cefn Coed  
Parc Nantgarw  
Cardiff  
CF15 7QQ

Tel: 01443 33 6000

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh.

Fax: 01443 33 6001

E-mail: [cadw@gov.wales](mailto:cadw@gov.wales) (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:cadw@gov.wales>)

## For unscheduled ancient monuments or historic features

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust  
41 Broad Street  
Welshpool  
Powys  
SY21 7RR

Tel: 01938 553670

Fax: 01938 552179

E-mail: [trust@cpat.org.uk](mailto:trust@cpat.org.uk) (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:trust@cpat.org.uk>)

Website: [www.cpat.org.uk](https://www.cpat.org.uk) (<https://cpat.org.uk/>) (<https://hba76/ERDMSCache/Hayhurstk/PriceR/DefaultHome/Objects/index.htm>)

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