

SRDP Rural Development Contracts: Forestry Challenge Funds

A Brief Guide for Community Woodland Groups

Introduction

The Forestry Challenge Funds are one of the eight funding streams (“delivery mechanisms”) that make up the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP): a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland over the next six years.

The Forestry Challenge Funds are administered by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). Scheme guidance notes, details of scoring criteria and application forms are all available from <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infid-7epeed>

Two funds are available: **Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT)**, and **Forestry for People (F4P)**. These have different eligibility criteria (explained in more detail) below, with some overlap – it is possible to apply for one or the other, or both together. There are **two** judging rounds for applications each year, with deadlines for submission of **31st March** and **30th September**.

You can submit an application at any time. We strongly advise that you discuss your application with Conservancy staff prior to submission and preferably at an early stage – they will be happy to advise and assist you. Likewise, CWA staff will be happy to assist you in planning and developing your application.

Funding

The maximum intervention rates vary according to the Challenge Fund applied for.

WIAT Challenge Fund: 75% FCS contribution to project costs.

F4P Challenge Fund: Up to 90% FCS contribution where the project cost is up to £5,000
Up to 75% FCS contribution where the project cost is up to £20,000
Up to 50% FCS contribution where the project cost is over £20,000

Existing staff time or contributions in kind are **not** eligible as match funding. However, Volunteer time can be counted at a rate of £50 per volunteer per day. The number of volunteer days has to be realistic and should be discussed with your Woodland Officer.

Match funding must be identified – it cannot be from EU or Scottish Government sources e.g. from other SRDP funds such as LEADER, but can be from the Lottery, Local Authorities, Landfill tax, Local Environmental Trusts, private donations etc.

Applicants for Forestry Challenge Funds can apply to other parts of the SRDP **as long as these applications are all for different operations**: e.g. LMO could pay for creating access routes for harvesting, Rural Priorities can contribute towards forest management operations such as restocking or conversion to continuous cover, you could apply to the Forestry for People Challenge Fund for help to establish a volunteer group, and a LEADER grant might contribute towards car parking and interpretation costs.

CWA staff will help you identify appropriate sources of funding for all of your projects.

Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT)

The WIAT Challenge Fund supports work to bring existing urban woodland into sustainable management and improve recreation facilities. In addition to the development of management plans and work to identify further funding opportunities, WIAT can fund a range of woodland management operations, including:

- thinning and enrichment planting to improve the woodland habitat
- removal of dangerous trees and invasive weeds
- rhododendron control to encourage development of native tree species
- path upgrades and construction, & improvement of drainage
- installation of steps and bridges,
- installation of seating and signage
- installation of gates to restrict motorbike use
- litter picking & fly tipping clearance

WIAT does not fund creation of new woodlands – this is funded through Rural Development Contracts: Rural Priorities, which includes support for planting a range of woodland types. An additional contribution of £1000 / ha is available for new planting in the WIAT area.

WIAT funding is only available in the “WIAT area” – i.e. ***woods within 1 km of settlements with a population of over 2000 people***. You can check which areas are eligible for the fund online, using the Forestry Commission’s Land Information Search: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-62fg7f>
NB: WIAT funding is not available for woods owned by Forestry Commission Scotland.

Forestry for People (F4P)

The F4P Challenge Fund is intended to help groups realise the potential contribution of local woodlands to the health, learning and strengthening of communities.

The minimum woodland size is 0.25ha. F4P funding ***covers all Scotland***, including the WIAT area, and is available on ***both private and Forest Enterprise land***.

F4P funding is intended to support community interaction with woodlands, rather than direct woodland management operations. Eligible works could include:

- public consultation, developing management plans, and management agreements between landowners and communities
- practical management skills for volunteers
- employment of a woodland ranger
- setting up walking initiatives
- forest school training
- developing natural play areas
- delivering rehabilitation programmes in woodland
- developing continuous professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers
- establishing volunteer groups
- developing not-for-profit initiatives such as green exercise projects

F4P applications promoting the use of woodlands for Health should ensure that they tie in with the Woods for Health Strategy, likewise projects to promote the use of woodlands for education should tie in with the local Forest Education Initiative (FEI) cluster and obtain support from this group if one exists. If there is no local group, guidance can be obtained from FCS Education advisors and the FEI website

Application Process

You can apply for both Challenge Funds at the same time, indeed such applications are encouraged where the eligibility criteria for both are met. The excel application form is constructed to permit application for either or both challenge funds at the same time. There are three forms to complete:

[Challenge Funds application part 1 \(PDF, 147k\)](#)

This is the applicant and woodland details. The file must be printed off and completed by hand, remember to sign and date the declarations, then post it to your local FCS Conservancy (contacts below) with any supporting maps and appendices.

[Challenge Funds application part 2 \(MS Word doc, 26k\)](#)

This form has 4 questions relating to monitoring and evaluation: Questions 1 and 2 ask you to describe the project and your proposed outcomes. Question 3 asks you to set out the indicators you will measure, and Question 4 asks you to state when you will measure your chosen indicators. These should be measured before work begins to give a baseline and after work has completed to demonstrate the impact of your project.

This form can be completed electronically and emailed to the Conservancy office together with the Excel spreadsheet form below.

[Challenge Funds application spreadsheet \(Excel spreadsheet, 234k\).](#)

This is where you list (and cost) the operations that you wish to carry out. There is an example sheet, and a guidance sheet – contact CWA staff if you require any assistance with this or any of the other forms.

Mark the file with your name and the property name, and always save this document to file before completing it, as some of the features may not work when viewed in your web browser.

Scoring and Judging Applications

Each application will be subject to a scoring system and assessed by a judging panel. Members of this panel are drawn from all over Scotland, one from each of the Regional Forestry Forums, plus representatives from FC Scotland. The panel will convene twice per year and will judge both Challenge Funds at the same time. All applications need to demonstrate community support – the level of engagement or consultation required will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the work being proposed. Applications for the F4P Challenge Fund with total project costs less than £5,000 will be scored by Conservancy staff and submitted to the judging panel for approval. The Social outcomes through Investment in Forestry Tool (SIFT) will be used to inform the judging process. Details at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-7kdhqj>

Contacts / More Information

CWA staff contacts: <http://www.communitywoods.org/index.php/staff/>

FCS Conservancy contact list: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/HCOU-4U4J23>

There is a very useful FAQ online at

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WIATF4PQA.pdf/\\$FILE/WIATF4PQA.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WIATF4PQA.pdf/$FILE/WIATF4PQA.pdf)

This Briefing Note was compiled by the Community Woodlands Association in May 2009, following discussion with Forestry Commission Scotland staff and using information from the FCS website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/inf-d-7epeed>