



North East England

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Update No 17 (10 June 2010)

In the face of the uncertainties surrounding the reduction of the financial deficit it is nice to take comfort in at least one thing - trees will continue to grow regardless! To help encourage more tree planting we have increased the range of Additional Contributions on offer to include a corridor the length of Northumberland and Durham west of the A1.

Also included is our usual timber movement update, information on how to ensure you are prepared for wildfires - timely given the recent fires in North Yorkshire, and information on the North Pennines Leader Programme.

EWGS Update

As we have been able to offer in-year grant aid for applications received this spring we are currently in a healthy position to receive new applications for payment in financial year 2011 and beyond. We have also been given greater regional flexibility to move funds between grants to ensure our budget is fully allocated.

This year we have allocated more funds to our Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG) which now totals £460,000, a £90,000 increase on last year's funding. This will be used to improve public access and to support increased levels of woodland management, including provision of roads and infrastructure, to help improve habit condition and woodland bird populations.

Our Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland WIG has been extended to include work within Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Information on this can be found in our [Ancient Woodland Site Guidance Note](#). To assist with identifying work within these woodlands we have made £50,000 available to draw up woodland plans.

We have maintained our Woodland Regeneration Grant at £275,000. This level of demand has been relatively stable since the opening of EWGS.

The prolonged winter did mean that many schemes were carried over into the 2010/2011 financial year but have been able to meet this demand by relocating national funds.

As already mentioned we are offering an Additional Contribution of £1,000 towards the creation of new woodlands in a corridor down through Northumberland and County Durham between the A1 and the Northumberland National Park and AONB boundaries. This is in recognition of the many benefits new coniferous and broadleaved woodlands bring to the environment. The full list of Additional Contributions is available in the [WCG Guidance Note](#) and [Addendum to the Guidance](#). A [Scoring Form](#) will need to be completed for each application in order to confirm eligibility. We are open to receive Creation Grant applications until the end of September.

In February 2009 the EU approved a change in the Single Payment Scheme such that land eligible for SPS in 2008 will continue to be eligible to receive SPS even when planted with trees and receiving Farm Woodland Payments.

The current Farm Woodland Payment rates are:

Land type/location	Rate for Farmers	Rate for Non Farmers
Arable land in the lowlands	£300/ha/year*	Eu150/ha/year cap*
Improved grassland in the lowlands	£200/ha/year*	Eu150/ha/year cap*
Unimproved land or land in the uplands	£60/ha/year*	£60/ha/year or Eu150/ha/year if lower

* Payments last for either 10 or 15 years depending species planted

A few thoughts on EWGS applications

If you are an agent or an applicant and wish to sign on behalf of your client please remember that we do have to have a letter of authority for you to do so. This also includes any felling licence conditions letters we may send you. We only require one letter per client, we can then refer to this for future reference. The [Agent Authority form](#) is available on grants pages of our website.

Also, a plea to get all applications in, well before you wish to start work, to avoid undue delays in cases where we may need further information.

Timber Sales

Timber removals from FE Forests are best described as vigorous. All of our customers report good order books and with the continuing weakness of the pound, which makes imported material more expensive, home grown timber is well placed to enjoy an improved share of the timber and products market. They do report some concern over conditions in the eurozone and with a cold spring and the world cup on the way, there is still a little nervousness in the garden products sector. However, the general trend across the product range is for continuing good levels of demand.

Fire Plans

Full fire plan coverage is still far from complete in areas of Northumberland, Durham, North Yorkshire and Cumbria states Darrin Woods who has been appointed Wildfire Project officer at Northwoods. To address this Darrin has written the following article and would like to speak to woodland owners interested in developing a plan.

A spate of wildfires in the North East over recent months has highlighted the importance of completing Fire Plans for individual properties and woodlands. The information contained in these form an important resource for the responding Fire & Rescue Service brigades, helping them to respond more quickly and therefore reduce the potential impact of damaging wildfires on private property values.

Completing Fire Plans is not an onerous task, and it is advisable to incorporate them within Woodland Management Plans. In the event of a wildfire incident, the Fire and Rescue Service can utilise the information contained to ensure that they know the appropriate people to contact and the best points of access for responding. A Fire Plan also provides them with sufficient information to ensure that land managers are notified about threats originating on adjacent properties.

Fire Plans have 2 parts – a text based document outlining key contact and location information, and an associated map with property boundaries and spatial information presented in a GIS format. Both of these documents are available to Fire & Rescue Services on their appliance-mounted Mobile Data Terminals.

The information included in Fire Plans is:

- key contacts for individual properties, as well as neighbours and other useful contacts such as contractors and equipment operators;
- rendezvous and access points;
- available equipment;
- water supplies;
- communications (what mobile phone coverage is like or any property-based radio networks);
- important hazards and priority areas;
- helicopter authorisation considerations.

Templates and guidance notes for the preparation of Fire Plans can be obtained from Rural Development Initiatives Ltd (parent company for the Morpeth based Northwoods), a not-for-profit organisation that is actively involved in the management of Wildfire Groups for Northumberland and Durham.

Further information on Fire Plans can be obtained from their [Northwoods website](#) or you can contact the Wildfire Project Officer on 01670 513 292.

North Pennines Dales Leader

The North Pennines Leader is an initiative for which forestry projects can benefit along with other enterprises. Forestry has not featured in the initiative so far and for those looking for help it may well be an appropriate avenue to explore. The information below provides a brief description of the Leader programme. For further information please visit the [North Pennines Leader website](#) or contact:

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North Pennine Dales LEADER covers the west of County Durham and the Southern parts of Tynedale in Northumberland. Most of the area lies within the [North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#). North Pennine Dales LEADER delivers local rural development strategy at grass roots level. LEADER is a bottom-up community-led approach to the delivery of Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funds,

which is jointly funded by Defra and the European Union, and is managed by One North East in the North East regions. The Leader Partnership will have £350,000 per annum to allocate until 2013.

Funding support is available for project activity that improves the financial and environmental performance of rural communities and local businesses without damaging the countryside. The LEADER approach is a community-led method of delivering rural development. It contributes towards DEFRA's priorities of:

- Making agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable
- Enhancing the environment and countryside
- Enhancing opportunities in rural areas

Key issues which the North Pennine Dales LEADER Project is seeking to address:

- Viability of agriculture and its potential effects on the natural and cultural assets of the area.
- Locally accessible services. It is becoming increasingly expensive to deliver services in conventional ways, innovative approaches need to be developed for rural communities to have equitable access, and this includes access to high quality broadband and communications technology.
- High value tourism. Increasing tourism connectivity, improving the quality of the offer and collective, cohesive marketing.
- Business growth and support. Appropriate support and resources to stimulate growth, improve competitiveness and create sustainable higher value employment.
- Young people. Retaining young people through raising aspiration and the provision of high quality developmental and career opportunities.
- Environmental footprint. Reducing the environmental footprint in rural areas through raising awareness, promoting and incentivising best practice and improving business's environmental performance.

North East Forestry Forum

The North East Forestry Forum is a made up of representatives from a wide range of organisations with interests in different aspects of forestry and the forestry industry in the north east region. One of the forum's main roles has been to oversee the North East Forestry Strategy, originally published in 2005.

A meeting of the forum is planned for 15th July 2010 in Newcastle. As this will be the first meeting for some time it will be a good opportunity for anyone interested in being involved to come along take part. The meeting will cover a range of topics, including the study of the economic

value of forestry in the region (which is currently being carried out), proposals to refresh the Regional Forestry Strategy and the recently published Policy on Restoration of Open Habitats from woodlands. If you are interested in attending please note this date in your diary and contact lucy.phillips@forestry.gsi.gov.uk so that further details of the meeting can be forwarded to you.

North of England Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy

Following the publication of the Review of Red Squirrel Conservation Activity in Northern England published in September 2009 the Forestry Commission has been working with partners, including Natural England, the Wildlife Trusts and the Red Squirrel Survival Trust to help refresh the conservation strategy for red squirrels across northern England.

A small development team has been established and work is currently underway to finalise plans in consultation with landowners, volunteers and red squirrel experts. Robert Benson has been appointed by the Red Squirrel Survival Trust (RSST) as project development manager with funding from the Forestry Commission. He will be working alongside staff from Natural England.

A framework document setting out the aims and objectives for Red Squirrel conservation in north England has been produced and the development team will be producing a more comprehensive plan over the next four months.

A key element of the strategy will be to put in place and co-ordinate grey squirrel control. It is hoped that a small team will be set up to work with landowners and local squirrel groups in order to achieve this.

Work to review the current suite of reserves and buffers across north England (now referred to as strongholds) is about to commence and this will involve the development of a new approach to squirrel monitoring for north England to help measure the impact of grey squirrel control on red and grey squirrel populations.

The Forestry Commission continues to support red squirrel conservation through the EWGS Red Squirrel WIG. Our support is based on a contribution 80% of standard costs for activities including grey control through trapping, purchase of squirrel traps and squirrel monitoring.

We would like to hear from anyone who manages or owns woodland within the reserves or buffers who would be interested in supporting red squirrel conservation. Details of the [red squirrel reserves](#) can be found on the FC website.

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Plant Health

There seems to be an ever increasing number of pests and diseases that are attacking our trees, many with similar names and associated with *Phytophthora* spp. Scholars in the languages will know that *Phytophthora* is Greek for Plant Destroyer, with *P. infestans* known as "late Blight of potato" contributing to the potato famine in Ireland in the mid 1800's.

Acute Oak Decline is a newly identified disease of native oak that is taking hold in Britain and appears to be associated with a new genus and several new species of bacterial pathogens on oak, some of which are hitherto unknown to science.

Forest research scientists have identified 55 sites in the midlands, and southern England where the disease is present with an estimated 2750 trees infected. Infected trees may die within 3-5 years.

Sudden Oak Death, *Phytophthora ramorum* first confirmed in the UK in April 2002 is now found across Great Britain, principally in the South and South West of England. Its principle host is *Rhododendron Pentium* and controls have focussed on removal and destruction of infected plants.

While surveying plants in Cornwall in 2003 for the disease, a second *Phytophthora* was discovered named *P. kernoviae*. By summer 2009 some 80 trees, mainly beech, had succumbed to these pathogens in England and Wales.

A new Defra funded £25 million 5 year programme was launched last April with the objective of protecting trees and woodland from diseases caused by the two pathogens.

In September 2009 the *P. ramorum* was found to have infected a number of Japanese larch trees at 5 locations in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset with 4 other sites under investigation. This is a worrying development and Forest Research are continuing their investigations.

More information on these and other tree pests can be found on the [Forest Research](#) website.

On the site you will find a range of general advice on symptoms, who to contact and measures that should be undertaken. These include sensible hygiene measures such as avoiding unnecessary contact with bleeding wounds to avoid spreading the disease and not using any chipped material as garden mulch.

End