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BETTER
WOODLANDS
FOR WALES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 March 2006



*72 people
approved as
Management
Planners to
date*



Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW) newsletter. This publication is aimed at Management Planners, Specialist Assessors, Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) staff and others in the forestry and woodland sector who are involved with woodland grants and licenses. We plan to publish the newsletter on a regular basis throughout the year to keep everyone up-to-date with news and progress relating to BWW. Feedback is welcome using the e-mail address at the end of the newsletter.

FCW Thanks Planners & Specialists

The first stage of the Selection Process came to an end at the close of 2005. From 220 expressions of interest, 124 individuals applied for a combination of different roles. 94 applications were made for the role of Management Planner, with 72 people being approved. Around 10% of these indicated that they could provide a Welsh language service to applicants. Field assessments for the Planner, PAWS, CCF & Social roles went well – some candidates even said they enjoyed them! There will be further field assessments during April and May, and the ecologist assessments will also start then. Greg Vickers, Operations Manager, who led on the selection process, said 'The response was better than expected, and the first part of the process has been a success. This is largely due to the commitment of the applicants and their willingness to work with FCW. We knew that the paperwork would be a little tedious, but the vast majority have accepted the need and got on and done it. FCW owes a big thanks to everyone involved. We will now be able to focus on providing good training to those who have passed through the Selection Process'.

Last date for WGS applications confirmed



First phase of WIG Costing Calculator now available



WGS to Close

We have now set important dates relating to the close of WGS. These are:

- **31st August 2006**, the last date for WGS applications & completed NWP's
- All claims relating to new WGS contracts to be made before **10th March 2007**. The only exception is for restocking (RS) grants which can be claimed anytime within the contract period. However, any RS claims made after **10th March 2007** will not be eligible for the RS supplements currently being paid.
- New planting (NP) grants to run until **10th March 2007**
- All CCF & PAWS assessments to be complete & submitted by **31st May 2006**

WGS Contract Extensions

To help contract holders, we will be automatically extending all those contracts which are due to end between 1st April 2005 & 31st March 2006, until 31st March 2007. This will enable outstanding work that can be done and the associated grants to be claimed before 31st March 2007. We will not accept any amendments to proposed work within these contracts. The offer excludes Annual Management Grant for the period of the contract extension because of EU restrictions associated with the payment of additional grant. Letters will be sent out in early March to notify contract holders. Contact your local office for further details. There is no change to Felling License applications.

Calculating Costs for Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG)

We have recognised that a new way of calculating the cost of operations is needed in order to agree realistic costs and reduce the uncertainty and inconsistency associated with the existing WIG application process. A working group made up of FCW staff and woodland managers has developed some easy to use costing models, based on Excel spreadsheets.

The first phase of the WIG Costing Calculator is now available for use and can be downloaded from the FCW Website: www.forestry.gov.uk/wales. Click on the heading WIG Costing Calculator that takes you to a page which tells you more and allows you to download the spreadsheet. Further guidance will be added to the website in the near future. The Calculator covers harvesting, infrastructure and vegetation control work. Other work types will be added later.



*OS maps
available*



*Initial
training
shows
support for
the scheme*

We are encouraging agents to use the Calculator to establish current working costs for new WGS applications, as part of a trial period prior to the implementation of BWW. An email address wig.costings@forestry.gsi.gov.uk has been set up for making constructive comments about the Calculator or for requesting help with problems. We welcome feedback, as this will allow us to make any necessary changes before the Calculator goes live later this year.

Introduction of New IT System

BWW will be administered on a new Web-based computer system which is now called G&L On-line (GLOL). There have been many delays and setbacks but we are at last nearing the introduction of the new system and testing is underway with the aim of introducing the early stages of the application process in mid-March. In the meantime we will open the map request service to help Planners to start making applications. See below.

Map Request Service Now Open

We are making Ordnance Survey maps available to Planners so that they can use them to identify the boundaries of areas they intend to enter into BWW. All Planners will receive instructions on how to request maps during early March. Planners will also be able to meet with Woodland Officers to discuss applications and agree the approach including the need for special assessments.

Training Has Started

The first training sessions for Planners were run during January. The 1-day sessions introduced Planners and FCW staff to the principles of BWW and the approach to different issues. There were many positive comments on the day and the feedback forms supported these. Planners were particularly interested in the approach to timber production and the support that the scheme will give owners with managing their woods and producing high quality timber, was welcomed.

Comments on training material provided at the courses are welcome. Please use the e-mail address at the end of the newsletter.

You will be notified of future training dates. Please bring your training packs to the next sessions.

*Completed
assessments
due by 31st
May 2006*



*New
Framework
Agreements
for working
together*



PAWS & CCF Assessments

For those of you who have contracts to undertake PAWS and CCF assessments, the completed assessment must be with FCW Clawddnewydd by 31st May 2006. After this date, PAWS & CCF assessments will only be done by approved assessors as part of BWW. Please also continue to submit completed assessments to Clawddnewydd – not directly to your local Woodland Officer. We will do our best to turn around assessments received at Clawdd quickly, but cannot guarantee this if you send them to other locations.

Contracts

During early March we will be writing out to all Planners to get information for the new Framework Agreements between FCW and Planners. We need to know whom the contract will be with. This can be an individual Planner or a company for the services of one or more Planners. At the same time we will be asking for the details that will appear on the official Planners list, which will be published on the FCW website. Please try and get this information back to us quickly.

Key Note

BWW is coming soon. There are many elements available to you now so don't leave it till everything is up and running before you start, spread out the learning by starting to use the elements that are now available. That way you'll be able to make the best use of the new IT system when it comes live.

Contact

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Forestry Commission Wales

