

Woodland Creation – Conifer

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On October 1st the Forestry Grant Scheme was updated to align with the new UK Forestry standard (2023). The eligibility criteria for the Conifer option have now changed.

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

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Aim

The aim of this scheme is to create conifer woodlands on land that is suitable for timber production and that is accessible for timber transport (including links to suitable public roads).

This option is principally aimed at planting Sitka spruce.

This option can be applied for as part of the Sheep and Trees initiative grant package.

Eligibility criteria

You must meet all eligibility criteria listed on the general [Woodland Creation](#) page and:

- you must comply with the UK Forestry Standard
- the minimum planting width is 15 metres
- the minimum block size is two hectares in any one year. Sitka spruce stock must be plants produced from open pollinated seed from seed orchards in the tested category, unless accessing the additional capital grant for use of Sitka spruce produced by vegetative propagation from seed derived from controlled pollinations in 'Parents of Families' in the tested category. You must provide a copy of the supplier's document when submitting an initial planting claim (see example and template below). This should include information such as quantity, the region of provenance and Master Certificate Number. See the Forestry Commission's [Marketing and Supplying Forest Reproductive Materials](#) for further information
- your application must meet the species composition criteria in the table below

Composition of conifer woodland			
Item	Minimum (per cent)	Maximum (per cent)	Minimum stocking density on the planted area at year five (per hectare)
Sitka spruce [1]	50	65	2,500
Other conifers [2]	10	40	2,500
Native broadleaves or shrubs [3]	5	15	1,100
Designed open ground [4]	0	10	n/a

[1] Intimate mixtures with other conifer are allowed, up to a maximum of 30 per cent, but the choice of species must meet the requirements of 'species selection'.

[2] Up to 50 per cent of 'other conifer' element can be productive broadleaves at a minimum of 2,500 per hectare stocking density eg 20 ha scheme with 10 ha of main conifer species, 6 ha of other conifer, 2 ha of native broadleaves and 2 ha of open ground, can replace up to 3ha (50 per cent) of other conifer with up to 3 ha of productive broadleaves. Choice of species must meet the requirements of 'species selection'

[3] Up to 20 per cent of the native broadleaves can be native woody shrubs

[4] You must refer to the designed open ground guidance on the general [Woodland Creation](#) page to see how designed open ground will apply to your application. For example additional open ground, in excess of the specified percentage, may be permissible depending on the specifics of the site, but will not be eligible for grant support.

Please note that in order to achieve 100 per cent from the table above you will not be able to select all minimum or all of the maximum values.

For applications being considered against UKFS (2017) the [Species Composition and Scoring guidance can be found here \(PDF, Size: 240.3 kB\)](#).

If you are unsure which UKFS edition your application will be assessed against, please refer to the [reference table for managing the UKFS change](#).

Species selection

As an initial first step in determining whether or not the site is climatically suitable you should view the 'Forestry Grant Scheme Climatic Site Suitability' folder on the [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer](#) page.

Any applications that are not shown as being climatically suitable will only be considered if you can clearly demonstrate that the site is suitable for the chosen species of trees, for example where there is localised shelter in an otherwise exposed location.

[Forest Research Bulletin 127 – Choice of Sitka Spruce Seed Origins for Use in British Forests](#) – C.J.A. Samuel, A.M. Fletcher and R. Lines.

As per the eligibility criteria of the [Woodland Creation general guidance](#) the tree species must be 'suitable' or 'very suitable' to the site and Sitka spruce must have the capacity to achieve an average yield class of 12 across the application area.

Yield class 10 may be considered acceptable in a minority of areas within an application as long as the average across the whole application area remains at 12 or above.



[Tree species codes \(PDF, Size: 88.0 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Species-Codes.pdf>

Scoring criteria

Each option within your application must meet the threshold score to be considered for approval. In achieving the threshold score, your option must score against each criterion, except for additional benefit.

The scores will then be used as the basis for allocating funding on a competitive basis through the Forestry Grant Scheme clearing process.

Delivery of option benefits

1 POINT – for applications that meet the eligibility criteria but do not deliver any of the benefits listed below.

3 POINTS – for applications that provide one or more of the following in addition to meeting the eligibility requirements.

- applications that will improve an existing afforested landscape by helping to resolve recognised design deficiencies – usually related to the design principles of relative scale and shape

Or

- applications that expand existing productive woodlands

Or

- applications that, in addition to the Conifer option, integrate at least two other appropriate woodland creation options (see explanation below) within the scheme boundary (the total area of the other options must equate to at least 30 per cent of the area of the main Conifer option)

Example for 3 points

200 hectares Conifer x 30 per cent = 60 hectares

A minimum of 60 hectares must be split between at least another two options. 200 hectares Conifer; 30 hectares Diverse Conifer; 20 hectares Broadleaves.

Total in application = 250 hectares

5 POINTS – for applications that meet one of the three-point criteria above and the criteria below:

- applications that expand existing woodlands and which recognise the impact of timber transport on public highways and are supported by an ‘agreed route’ for timber transport

Scale of delivery

1 POINT – for applications between 2 hectares and 19.99 hectares.

3 POINTS – for applications between 20 hectares and 49.99 hectares.

5 POINTS – for applications above 50 hectares.

Delivering better quality

1 POINT – for applications that meet the minimum diversity eligibility criteria for this option, which is:

- Up to 65 per cent Sitka Spruce

3 POINTS – for applications that deliver more than the minimum diversity eligibility criteria for this option, which is:

- Up to 60 per cent Sitka Spruce

5 POINTS – for applications that deliver the maximum diversity eligibility criteria for this option, which is:

- Up to 55 per cent Sitka Spruce

Delivery of good practice

1 POINT – for applications which meet the minimum relevant industry standards but do not deliver any of the benefits detailed below.

3 POINTS – for applications that meet one of the criteria detailed below:

- applications which demonstrate that you have liaised with consultees, communities and neighbours, prior to the scheme being submitted and addressed, where possible, any points they may have raised

5 POINTS – for applications that meet one of the criteria below:

- applications which clearly demonstrate that you have thoroughly assessed the site conditions and propose the most appropriate management techniques to minimise the impacts to the environment. This must be beyond what you might be compelled to do within the conditions of the contract or recognised as an industry standard practice

Or

- applications which are community owned, led, or supported and clearly demonstrate the delivery of significant benefits to the local community such as designed landscape

Value for money

Applications where the cost of ancillary eligible capital supporting works, e.g. fencing, gates, tree shelters, bracken control, are:

1 POINT – more than 30 per cent of the total capital cost for initial planting.

6 POINTS – less than 30 per cent of the total capital cost for initial planting.

Example for six points

Core capital item:

Initial planting 10 hectares 'Conifer' = £19,200

Ancillary capital items:

Deer Fence: 700 metres x £6.80 = £4,760

Ancillary costs as a percentage of the total costs of initial planting:

$£4,760 \div £19,200 = 25 \text{ per cent.}$

10 POINTS – less than 10 per cent of the total capital cost for initial planting.

Supplementary point – additional benefit

1 POINT – will be awarded, as an additional point, where:

- applications are in an area identified as 'preferred' within the relevant Forestry and Woodland Strategy (or equivalent)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Eligibility criteria	Minor addition made to species selection guidance
Eligibility Criteria	Changes to Species Composition table to align with UK Forestry Standard (2023)
Scoring Criteria	Changes to Delivering Better Quality criteria to align with UK Forestry Standard (2023)

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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