Sustainable Management of Forests – Low Impact Silvicultural Systems

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Aim

The aim of this option is to facilitate the transformation of stands to low impact silvicultural systems (LISS).

Low impact silvicultural systems are a type of woodland management that helps to increase species and structural diversity. It normally causes less rapid change to the landscape and to the physical environment than clear felling systems and so can help the landowner meet multi-purpose objectives.

In the context of climate change, varied silvicultural systems will increase the resilience of forests and may limit the damage caused by extreme events, such as gales or pests outbreaks.

Grant support

This is an annual grant to support the additional costs for deer control and management planning that are required to implement low impact silvicultural systems.

The rate is £30 per hectare per year for up to a maximum of five years.

You can apply for a separate grant under the Woodland Improvement Grant – Low Impact Silvicultural Systems option to support related works that are considered capital items, such as cultivation and monitoring.

Application eligibility criteria

Please check that you are eligible to apply for Forestry Grant Scheme funding before you begin your application. You can do this through the link below.

Sustainable Management of Forests

To apply, you must have an approved Forest Plan for woodland areas of 100 hectares or more. For woodland areas less than 100 hectares you must have an approved Forestry Commission Scotland Management Plan or Forest Plan.

Long-term Forest Plan technical guidance

Management Plan

You must have a Deer Management Plan. All deer control must comply with best practice guidance and you must retain all cull records.

The Sustainable Management of Forests – Species Conservation – Reducing Deer Impact option is not eligible under areas covered by Sustainable Management of Forests – Low Impact Silvicultural Systems.

Site suitability must be ranked 'moderate' or 'good' according to FC Information Note 40.

The woodland area must contain trees that are of seed bearing age for the species concerned, as the purpose of the grant is to support the transformation phase from later thinnings into seeding and secondary fellings, and encouraging, promoting and managing natural regeneration.

Please read the supporting information below for the details you need to supply when applying for this option. Note that you must use the appropriate standard template to give this information.

Other eligibility criteria

If you are removing trees, you must have an approved felling licence for thinning or small-scale felling.

Annual monitoring

You must undertake annual deer damage assessments

Due to the complexity and variety of low impact silvicultural systems, your annual deer damage assessments can be tailored to suit your woodland management situation. You can model your damage assessments on either the nearest neighbour method or using herbivore impact assessments. Guidance on both methods are provided in the How to claim section below. Details of the survey method used and the survey results must be submitted annually.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

If the application area is within or affecting a Site of Special Scientific Interest or Natura site the proposed work must fit with the objectives set out in the site management statement which you must give in support of your application.

Supporting information

We need supporting information to help us assess your application. Please provide the information listed below using the template provided.

Low Impact Silvicultural Systems supporting information template (MS Word, Size: 542.2 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/smf-wig-liss-supp-info-template-2.doc

- provide a brief analysis of the current structure of the woodland showing its suitability for a low impact silvicultural system / continuous cover forestry and why conversion to a low impact silvicultural system would be appropriate
- describe the silvicultural system proposed and the desired stand structure and species. You must identify seed trees on the ground, where appropriate
- provide a breakdown of the management work expected to be carried out during the plan period – include harvesting methods and time scales
- you must provide a Deer Management Plan and an assessment of the existing deer numbers and how deer impacts will be addressed, including control measures. The aim should be to reduce deer to levels so that regeneration is capable for target species, including soft conifers
- you must provide a map that shows the area of low impact silvicultural systems, including indicative areas of thinning and felling expected during the plan period

Deer Management Plan template (MS Word, Size: 601.1 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/general-deer-management-plan-v2.doc

General mapping guidance for the Forestry Grant Scheme

Scoring criteria

We have set agreed financial budgets for each of the options under the Forestry Grant Scheme.

To ensure that we make the most cost effective use of funding available and to meet Scottish Government objectives, we will assess each application using scoring criteria.

These criteria will be specific to each option. Each application will receive a score based upon the scoring criteria and we will set a minimum score for each option.

Threshold score = 2 points

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 requirements but do not deliver any of the benefits detailed below.

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

- applications which identify that 50 per cent or more of the proposed species area is ranked in the Ecological Site Classification as being very suitable ('optimal')

Or

- applications which clearly describes in the plan the management objectives and how they will be achieved. This will need to include information such as monitoring. For example, an annual assessment to determine a suitable ‘mast year’ or a plan of interventions, such as, if the regeneration does establish, what future works are proposed (e.g. re-spacing)

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

- applications that can clearly demonstrate that the proposed low impact silvicultural system management, in SSSI/Natura designated woodlands currently failing to achieve 'favourable' condition, will help towards bringing 100 per cent of the feature into 'favourable' condition

Or

- applications that identify a waterbody which is classified as being in 'bad', 'poor', or 'moderate' status. Refer to the ‘map view’ on Scotland’s Environment web page to find the 'river classification' in the 'water' section. Your plan should demonstrate how the low impact silvicultural system activities proposed, within the approval period of the plan, will help to reduce the 'forestry' pressure on this waterbody. Your local conservancy office will be able to confirm if your application meets this requirement

Supplementary point – additional benefit

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

- applications can clearly demonstrate work that will enhance views of the forest landscape by reducing future visual impact of forest operations

How to claim

We will pay grants for up to five years for each year that your contract is covered by a Forest Plan or Management Plan. If your Forest Plan or Management Plan expires during the five years of your contract you must ensure that it is renewed in time to be able to continue making annual claims. We cannot pay your claim for any claim year that is not covered by a Forest Plan or Management Plan.

You must claim this grant on your Single Application Form.

You must submit evidence each year to enable payment. Deer damage assessments can be based on either the nearest neighbour method or herbivore impact assessments.

Nearest neighbour method

Herbivore impact assessment method (MS Word, Size: 233.5 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/herbivore-impact-assessment-method.doc

Your evidence must include:

- a map showing the area that is being claimed and the areas that have been surveyed
- your annual damage assessment survey results
- if the nearest neighbour method is used, a map of the recorded plots within your stratified areas, and the starting points
- cull records for verification

You must also keep a record of the time inputs and visits for the planning and management of low impact silvicultural system areas.

You must submit your evidence to your local Forestry Commission Scotland office between 1 December and 31 January. If we do not receive your evidence within this period we will not be able to pay your claim.

Technical guidance

- Long-term Forest Plan technical guidance
- Management Plans
- General mapping guidance for the Forestry Grant Scheme
- Deer Management Plan guidance
- Best Practice Guidance
- Nearest Neighbour Method for Quantifying Wildlife Damage to Trees in Woodland
- Felling licence guidance
- Forest Research Information Note 29 – What is Continuous Cover Forestry?
- Forest Research Information Note 40 – Transforming Even-aged Conifer Stands to Continuous Cover Management
- Forest Research Information Note 45 – Monitoring the Transformation of Even-aged Stands to Continuous Cover Management
- The Costs and Revenues of Transformation to Continuous Cover Forestry – Owen Davies and Gary Kerr
- software is available to support transformation to low impact silvicultural systems / continuous cover forestry

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Other eligibility criteria: Annual monitoring	Amendments to guidance on annual monitoring.	You must maintain records of your deer damage assessments. You must carry out annual monitoring through the nearest neighbour method to assess deer impacts and any changes to the condition of the woodland. The annual	You must undertake annual deer damage assessments. Due to the complexity and variety of low impact silvicultural systems, your annual deer damage assessments can be tailored to suit your woodland management situation. You

		monitoring survey must contain a map of the surveyed areas with the recorded plots referenced – preferably located on the map via GPS – and a table detailing the findings of the survey.	can model your damage assessments on either the nearest neighbour method or using herbivore impact assessments. Guidance on both methods are provided in the How to claim section below. Details of the survey method used and the survey results must be submitted annually.
Supporting information	Low Impact Silvicultural Systems supporting information template [Word document added]		
	Deer Management Plan template [Word document added]		
How to claim		You must submit your deer damage assessments annually. Keep cull records for checking by our woodland officers as evidence of deer control.	You must submit evidence each year to enable payment. Deer damage assessments can be based on either the nearest neighbour method or herbivore impact assessments. Nearest neighbour method Herbivore impact assessment method [Word document added] Your evidence must include: • a map showing the area that is being claimed and the areas that have been surveyed • your annual damage assessment survey results • if the nearest neighbour method is used, a map of the recorded plots within your stratified areas, and the starting points • cull records for verification
	Amendment to guidance.	You must submit your records to your local Forestry Commission Scotland office between 1 December and 31 January. If we do not receive your records within this period we will not be able to pay your claim.	You must submit your evidence to your local Forestry Commission Scotland office between 1 December and 31 January. If we do not receive your evidence within this period we will not be able to pay your claim.

Previous versions

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