

The National Forest Freewoods Scheme – for schemes up to 1 Hectare

Guidance Notes

Procedure:

Enquiry:

- Landowner may first engage with the NFC to discuss their land's potential and the process
- NFC can share list of Agents within the Forest who may be able to help with the scheme

Submission:

- At concept stage, Agent consults NFC to discuss any known constraints
- Agent designs a scheme around landowners aspirations and suitability of the site using the woodland types to guide the process
- Agent completes standard costs table and schedule of works
- Agent submits application & spreadsheet of costs (NFFW1), and design maps, to the NFC for approval

Authorisation:

- NFC approve scheme or makes recommendations of amendments
- Agent reworks scheme if applicable and returns to NFC
- NFC approves scheme and confirms acceptance and arrangements for implementation in writing to landowner and Agent

Implementation:

- Agent instructs and contract manages implementation in Year 1.
- Upon satisfactory establishment, NFC inspect in Feb/March and release payment for design costs, Year 1 agent implementation fees and overall costs of the scheme (minus Year 2 & 3 Agent fees).
- Agent manages to successful establishment / compliance as costs table in Year 2 and 3

Completion:

- NFC inspect in Year 4 (Feb) and release retained Agent fees from Year 2 & 3 upon satisfactory establishment in Feb/March
- NFC close agreement with Agent via letter
- NFC close agreement via letter to landowner and include guidance notes on future care and maintenance

Delivery Method:

1. Agent to design a scheme and produce a specification based on a slimmed down version of the CLS standard costs.
2. NFC to influence any design amendments and Agent to edit. NFC pay Agent flat rate up to £700 for each scheme submitted **once approved**.
3. Agent implements scheme in Year 1 and receives maximum payment of £600 on completion of works. Agent establishes scheme to Year 3 with NFC monitoring, releasing agent payment in Year 4 post successful establishment to maximum value of £400. (NFFW2 to claim grant. NFFW3 to claim Year 4 payment).

Conditions of Scheme:

1. The applicant must own the land where the wood is to be created, **or** have the written agreement of the owner of the land.
2. Only one Freewoods scheme is allowed per landholding per financial year.
3. The land must be **in The National Forest, or close to the boundary**. Please contact us if the project is outside the boundary.
4. The land must be a **minimum of 0.25** hectares but less than one hectare.
5. Blocks of woodland must be a **minimum of 0.1** hectares.
6. The land cannot be under an existing environmental stewardship scheme or be a condition of planning permission.
7. The planting must be completed **by March 15th** each year.
8. The Applicant agrees to allow the Agent to implement the scheme according to the specifications attached and to allow the agent and contractors such access to the site that is reasonable in order to allow for the completion of the work.
9. Different woodland types can be used to form a single scheme and scheme design is not confined to the woodland types listed.
10. Connection, roadside and shelterbelt woodlands less than 0.25 hectares may be considered depending on location, landscape and circumstances.
11. The minimum number of trees that can be planted is 1,100 per hectare and the maximum number of trees is 2,500 per hectare.
12. An appointed agent designs, applies to the NFC, implements and completes the works through to completion in Year 4.
13. The scheme designed must work for the NFC, the landowner and the site location.
14. The land must be suitable for tree planting, avoiding, for example, flood plain areas, conservation or archaeology sites or land which has services (water, sewers, gas electricity, phone cables etc.) running through or over it.
15. The Applicant and Agent will liaise to draw up a hazards and constraints map for the site and give copies to the contractors. The Agent will request Risk Assessments where appropriate and oversee safe working practices and be responsible for the implementation works regarding Health & Safety, any EU Habitat Regulations and UK best practice guidance on woodland creation.
16. The Agent will ensure that all Contractors working in connection with the scheme will carry out the works in accordance with best practice and that Contractors are fully trained in the task they have been asked to do and hold appropriate certification and public liability insurance.
17. Once the scheme is approved by the NFC, the cost of the design and application process will be paid to the Agent, by the NFC.
18. The NFC will **pay the Agent directly** the costs for the implementation for the scheme according to the agreed menu of standard costs spreadsheet, post successful implementation in Year 1. All standard costs are exclusive of VAT.
19. The scheme will be inspected again in Year 4 by the NFC and the Agent invited to claim the retained Year 2 and 3 Agent's fees as detailed in the menu of standard cost spreadsheet. This will be paid subject to the woodland being in a satisfactory condition.
20. Where landowners are currently in receipt of Single Payment Schemes (SPS) on land entered in to the Freewoods scheme, the landowner will liaise with the Rural Payments Agency to determine whether there will be any changes to their SPS.
21. After the initial 3 year period, the **landowner agrees to maintain the trees in good condition for a further 7 years** to ensure that the woodland becomes established.

Woodland Types:

The table below shows woodland type suggestions for possible schemes. The NFC will consider any woodland designed to suit its location and objectives.

Type of Woodland	Definition	Descriptive Guidelines	Benefits
Wildlife Wood	A woodland designed to maximise the benefit to wildlife	High forest and native flowering tree species throughout the seasons Inclusion of fruit bearing shrubs and scrub habitat –Sowing of species rich wildflower grass seed mixes appropriate to the soil pH Where appropriate rides are included, consider structure as per 3 zone principle. Planted at a minimum 1100/Ha, wetland and open space where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife – notably birds and invertebrates • Landscape enhancement • Amenity value and enjoyment
Firewood Woodland	A woodland designed specifically for the supply of firewood for fuel	Ash, birch, hornbeam &, sycamore with suggested planting @ 2500/Ha with no open space unless appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for domestic heating/reducing fuel bills • Carbon neutral/reducing fossil fuel usage • Sustainable & eco-friendly • Felling licence avoided with regular and small scale interventions
Shelterbelt	Linear woodlands planted at 10-20m widths alongside field margins, or, individually designed shelter woods around farmsteads and/or buildings	Shrubs grading up to small trees and into high forest NVC W8 or W10 for the central strip, and then grading down to shrub on the other side. Suggested @ 2250/Ha with no open space unless appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter for livestock • Privacy/screening • Noise reduction • Soil protection • Improved working or living environment
Connection Wood	A woodland designed to provide a link to another woodland(s) or nature conservation habitat	A non-prescriptive woodland but one that is appropriate to the setting and surroundings. Minimum 1100/Ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat/biodiversity improvement • Landscape enhancement • Wildlife populations
Roadside Wood	Linear plantings 10-20m wide alongside roadsides and field margins	Hedgerow/shrub grading up to small trees and into high forest for the central strip, and then grading down to shrub and hedgerow on the other side. Minimum 1100/Ha with no open space unless appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy/screening • Noise reduction
Colour Wood	A woodland designed to display seasonal colour throughout the year	Shrubs, small trees and tall trees both evergreen and deciduous, planted at a minimum 1100/Ha with open space where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape enhancement • Amenity value and enjoyment • Wildlife – notably birds and invertebrates

Type of Woodland	Definition	Descriptive Guidelines	Benefits
Wet Woodland	Woodlands suited to areas of wetter ground or along watercourses where land is unproductive	Areas of light and shade, open ground, scrub thicket and open canopy and closed canopy areas if near watercourses or ponds. Suggested 1100 stems/Ha, including 10% shrub, and adequate open space, sited appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat/biodiversity improvement • Landscape
Sporting Wood	A woodland designed for small scale game bird rearing or recreation	Mixed woodland with conifers, broadleaves, woody shrubs and areas for cover crops or access. Could include coppice strips and perimeter hedges. Open space sited appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional income stream • Recreation provision • Farm diversification • Habitat/biodiversity improvement • Landscape/amenity enhancement • Wildlife populations