



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

National Forest for Wales – The Woodland Investment Grant (Pilot 2021): rules booklet

Follow these rules and guidance for The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG) (Pilot 2021).

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Key messages

- The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG) Scheme is open to applications from landowners and those with full management control of land.
- The scheme provides grants to enhance and expand existing woodlands and create new woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, which have the potential to become part of the National Forest in the future. This means woodlands that are well-managed, accessible to people and give local communities the opportunity to get involved.
- The grant provides 100% funding.
- The maximum grant award per application is up to £250,000 and the minimum is £10,000.
- The capital budget for this window is £2.5 million, plus revenue budget of £250k.
- It is expected any necessary consents or permissions where required, such as environmental impact assessments or planning permission, need to be in place before applying to the scheme or close to being achieved.
- The window for applications opens on 14 July 2021 and closes 27 August 2021.
- The project and costs incurred must be complete by 31 March 2022.
- The application has been developed digitally and is available through the **RPW Online service**. Applications must be made by the publicised deadlines.
- Guidance on completing your TWIG application online is available at Welsh Government: **The Woodland Investment Grant**.
- Eligibility queries relating to the scheme can be sent to **NationalForestWales@Gov.Wales**

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Section A: Introduction

These Guidance Notes explain the new National Forest scheme for 2021/22, 'The Woodland Investment Grant' (TWIG) and the kind of woodland projects that may qualify for grant aid. The application window will open on 14 July 2021 and will close on 27 August 2021. The budget available for this application window is £2.5m capital and £250,000 revenue funding. All works to be complete by 31 March 2022.

The Welsh Government acknowledges the timescales involved this year are not ideal for larger woodland creation projects and some projects will not be possible in the timeframe. However, we working under the constraint of a one-year budget allocation, so for this round of TWIG we are looking at:

- better accessibility through opening up and improving the quality of existing woodlands, which are likely to already have well developed management plans in place, to make them more welcoming, accessible and attractive to potential visitors, such as funding for accessible footpaths, signage and habitat creation for biodiversity;
- 'ready to go' woodland creation projects where any necessary planning and environmental consents (such as planning permission and environmental impact assessments) have already been granted or close to being achieved;
- small scale woodland creation projects which are deemed not to require planning and environmental consents and in areas which will not impact on other priority habitats for example (see Welsh Government's [Woodland Opportunities Map](#));
- blending TWIG grants with other funding streams. For example, if you have recently planted or about to plant a new woodland funded via other sources, such as the Welsh Government's Glastir Woodland Creation Scheme or private investment, are there aspects of the woodland that could be improved with additional funding from this scheme e.g. to create new or enhanced public access.

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If you have a project that could potentially create a National Forest woodland, but it cannot be delivered this year under this scheme, the **National Forest team** would like to hear from you to help us to develop and refine the scheme in future years.

The Woodland Investment Grant

TWIG is open to anyone that owns and/or has full management control of land within Wales.

A grant of up to £250,000 (largely capital funding with revenue funding up to 10% of the total project cost) is available to fund the enhancement and expansion of existing woodlands and the creation of new woodlands with the potential to become part of the National Forest. The woodland projects will need to be able to demonstrate clear benefits for local people and biodiversity, whilst supporting Welsh Government's aim of tackling the climate change emergency and our long-term vision for a National Forest in Wales.

Projects will be required to demonstrate how the works will help the woodland meet the National Forest outcomes (see Annex 1 for more information) or is at least working towards meeting them:

Essential outcomes:

- good quality, well designed and managed resilient woodlands
- woodlands accessible to people
- community involvement in woodlands

Highly desirable outcomes:

- connected woodlands
- dynamic, multi-purpose woodlands and trees

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- woodlands that demonstrate learning, research and innovation

Projects seeking funding must align with these outcomes and make a contribution to the overarching long-term vision for a National Forest that:

- extends the length and breadth of Wales;
- can provide many opportunities by planting, growing and protecting trees, such as:
 - contributing to decarbonisation goals and the climate change emergency;
 - halting the decline of biodiversity;
 - improve health and wellbeing of our people;
 - supporting commercial business activity such as timber production, recreation and tourism.

Following the works, should you deem the woodland to meet the three essential outcomes and one or more of the highly desirable outcomes an application can be made to Welsh Government for National Forest accreditation (see separate guidance on applying for National Forest accreditation, which will be made available later in 2021). Alternatively, you can wait until further work is complete in subsequent years before applying.

Projects should be developed in line with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). The UKFS defines the approach to sustainable forest management in the UK and applies to all woodland. The standard covers different elements of sustainable forest management including:

- climate change;
- biodiversity;
- people;
- historic environment;
- landscape;
- soil;

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- water.

For further information and advice on managing and enhancing woodlands, visit:

- [Natural Resources Wales](#)
- [Llais y Goedwig](#)
- [Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust](#)

Items available for funding

Support under this scheme covers capital and revenue investment in public and privately owned existing and new woodlands (outside of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate) with the potential to meet the National Forest outcomes and become part of the network. The capital grant may be supplemented with revenue funding – see below.

The capital funding can cover items such as trees and plants, creating and enhancing public access, land, tools and small-scale equipment and procuring contractors to undertake work. There are no limits to the size or configuration of areas of trees to be planted, except it needs to demonstrate National Forest outcomes, meet the requirements of the UKFS and the project needs to exceed £10k.

Examples of eligible capital costs are provided below, but to note this is not a definitive list and all items of expenditure will be considered on a case by case basis:

- purchasing of trees, shrubs and other plants to create, expand or enhance woodland areas;
- preparation of a site such as fencing, clearing litter, removing invasive non-native species;
- constructing accessible pathways and gates with a commitment to keep

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- open and maintain for at least 20 years, if not indefinitely;
- creating nature/educational trails;
 - creating spaces to support and view nature;
 - the cost of labour associated with any activities related to the enhancement and/or creation of the woodland area;
 - signage/interpretation boards;
 - benches/seating;
 - compostable toilets;
 - bike racks;
 - tools/ small scale equipment (works which require larger equipment/ specialised skills will need to be contracted in and funded through this scheme);
 - land purchase where no more than 10% of the total project cost;
 - project delivery (e.g. project planning, procurement of materials, financial management of the project) where no more than 10% of the total project cost;
 - Welsh language provision e.g. costs of translation;
 - the costs of promoting the woodland to the wider community e.g. printing leaflets;
 - tracks (only if clear evidence of need for public access);
 - roads (only if clear evidence of need for public access);
 - car park (only if clear evidence of need for public access).

Before agreeing to fund tracks, roads and car parks, Welsh Government will need to see evidence you have considered other options for the public accessing the woodland first, such as active travel (i.e. walking and cycling) and public transport and discounted them with appropriate reasons.

You may apply for revenue funding up to 10% of the total project cost, which can be used to pay for people services to develop and to support the delivery of the project. Examples of eligible revenue costs are below, but again this is not an exhaustive list:

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- activities that enable the project to involve a wider array of people such as events to promote the woodland scheme to the local community and to celebrate achievements;
- training and support for people and/ or volunteers to participate in delivering the woodland;
- volunteering good practice and expenses (in line with Wales Council for Voluntary Action guidance);
- specialist advice/consultancy services.

Ineligible costs

The following items are examples of expenditure, which are **not eligible** for grant aid. This is not a definitive list and all items of expenditure will be considered on a case by case basis:

- purchase of land where the costs exceed 10% of the total project cost;
- purchase of buildings;
- any physical work on site carried out before the authorised start of work date;
- purchase of vehicles;
- own labour and equipment costs;
- revenue costs such as salaries for key staff;
- medium/ large scale machinery and equipment;
- consumables (items which are normally written off within a year);
- general office equipment and furniture;
- maintenance costs;
- working capital;
- reclaimable VAT;
- costs connected with a leasing contract such as the lessors margin, interest financing cost, overheads and insurance charges;
- costs of arranging overdraft facilities, loans or other financial support instruments including any associated fees or other charges;

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- overheads allocated or apportioned at rates materially in excess of those used for any similar work carried out by the applicant;
- notional expenditure;
- payments for activity of a political nature;
- depreciation, amortisation and impairment of assets purchased with the help of a grant;
- provisions;
- contingent liabilities;
- contingencies;
- profit made by the applicant;
- dividends;
- interest charges;
- service charges arising on finance leases, hire purchase and credit arrangements;
- costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors;
- costs involved in winding up a company;
- payments for unfair dismissal;
- payments into private pension schemes;
- payments for unfunded pensions;
- compensation for loss of office;
- bad debts arising from loans to employees, proprietors, partners directors, guarantors, shareholders or a person connected with any of these;
- payments for gifts and donations;
- entertainments;
- statutory fines and penalties;
- criminal fines and damages;
- legal expenses in respect of litigation.

Costs related to the purchase of equipment are only eligible for grant aid when the cost has been correctly defrayed by the claimant. Therefore, the full costs of any equipment secured under a hire purchase or lease hire agreement or any other form of financial arrangement is not eligible for grant aid.

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Maximum grant rate and maximum grant threshold

The grant amount is made up from the total public sector contribution to the project, which is solely domestically funded by the Welsh Government.

The maximum grant award is £250,000 and the minimum is £10,000.

The maximum revenue grant award is £25,000 (based on claiming up to 10% of the total project cost) and the minimum is either £0 if revenue is not required or £1,000 (based on 10% of £10,000 minimum grant).

The maximum grant rate for any individual project is 100% of the total eligible costs (excluding VAT).

It is expected you will usually have only one investment project running per woodland at any given time. However, for those with more than one site, you may make an application for each.

UK subsidy control

This award of Funding is made on and subject to the Conditions and under the authority of the Minister for Climate Change, one of the Welsh Ministers, acting pursuant to functions transferred under section 58A of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

You must ensure that the use of the Funding is compatible with the applicable agreements contained in the World Trade Organisation rules, UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, any Free Trade Agreement involving the UK the Northern Ireland Protocol and any relevant domestic legislation.

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Section B: The Woodland Investment Grant - eligibility

You are eligible if:

- You are registered with the Welsh Government and have been issued with a Customer Reference Number (CRN). You must be registered with Rural Payments Wales (RPW) Online. To register your business details for the first time, you need to complete the **online registration form | gov.wales**. Please refer to the **how to register guidance | gov.wales** for further details.
- You own and/or have full management control of land either with existing woodland or suitable for planting trees and the potential to meet the National Forest outcomes. If you currently lease the land for example, you will need to demonstrate you have a long lease with a minimum of 20 years left.
- You have or will have in place all necessary planning and environmental consents before the project commences (see below).

Planning permission and environmental consents

It is your responsibility to obtain any necessary planning consent and abide by any other relevant statutory requirements. If you are proposing a project which may require, for example, planning permission and/or an environmental impact assessment, you are advised to consult with the relevant licensing authority, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Local Authority (LA) or other agency as consent may be required to carry out the work (see Annex 2 for more information).

Given the timescales involved in applying for consent to carry out works if needed, then unless already in place or close to being obtained, there is unlikely to be sufficient time to apply to TWIG this year. As mentioned in section A, for

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this round of TWIG we are looking at:

- opening up and improving the quality of existing woodlands to make them more accessible to visitors and habitat creation;
- 'ready to go' projects which have already been through the planning and environmental impact assessment processes or is close to being completed;
- blending TWIG funding with an existing project, such as Glastir Woodland Creation, which will have already gone through a separate verification process;
- smaller projects which do not require regulatory consent such as an EIA, must still demonstrate the area is suitable for tree planting and sensitivities have been taken into account.

An indication of the likely sensitivities on a proposed site can be found in the Welsh Government's [Woodland Opportunities Map](#) and following the guidance outlined in [GN002](#). In addition, you may also wish to look at NRW's Wales Environment Information Portal: [Wales Information for Nature Based Solutions \(WINS\)](#) and speak to your Local Nature Partnership representative.

You also need to check your proposals do not, for example, break any byelaws, obstruct rights of way, damage the environment or cause pollution. For example, where professional herbicide products are to be used to control invasive non-native species (INNS) you should consider the use of specialist contractors and ensure anyone using pesticides holds the relevant qualifications. You should also check whether any permissions or licenses are required such as SSSI consent, herbicide use near water or an INNS management measure licence.

Welsh Government understands that, in some instances, there will be projects currently going through the consents processes, so you will be unable to have all permissions in place when making an application. Therefore, in this instance applications will be accepted prior to necessary agreements. However, these agreements will be required to be detailed within the application and will be required to be obtained before the project begins. **A failure to have the**

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necessary licences and or agreements in place by the agreed dates within the application will result in a withdrawal of grant award.

The payment of any grant will not be made until the original licence and/or agreement approval documents have been received and approved by the Welsh Government.

Section C: Outcomes and Indicators

As described above, the TWIG scheme requires your woodland to achieve or be working towards the National Forest outcomes (see Annex 1 for more information):

Essential outcomes:

- good quality, well designed and managed resilient woodlands
- woodlands accessible to people
- community involvement in woodlands

Highly desirable outcomes:

- connected woodlands
- dynamic, multi-purpose woodlands and trees
- woodlands that demonstrate learning, research and innovation

The outcomes correspond to and can be measured by one or more of the indicators listed below:

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Indicator	Area (hectares)	Number of individuals
Existing woodland area enhanced by the project		-
New woodland area created by the project		-
Additional area of woodland with open or permissive access created by the project		-
Woodland area with accessibility enhancements from the project so that woodland is open to all users		-
Woodland area enhanced for biodiversity reasons by the project		-
Additional visitors/volunteers annually as a result of the project	-	
Number or jobs created/safeguarded by the project	-	

Cross cutting themes

There are three cross cutting themes or outcomes for the National Forest:

- climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- supporting tourism and the economy;
- supporting or delivering skills and training.

As part of the application you will be asked to describe how your project will

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contribute to one or more of these themes.

Section D: Applying to the Woodland Investment Grant Scheme – the two stage assessment process

The application process will be in two stages. In Stage 1, the following sections of the application will be assessed and scored against selection criteria:

- Strategic fit
- Delivery
- Long term sustainability
- Value for money

If selected, the application will progress to Stage 2 and the following sections will be assessed to complete the full appraisal of the application.

- Financial and compliance
- Indicators and outcomes
- Cross cutting themes
- Management of operation
- Suitability of the investment

Submitting an application

You can only apply for TWIG by accessing RPW Online. If you are not registered with RPW Online and wish to submit an application, please refer to the guidance on how to register available on this link [Rural Payments Wales \(RPW\) Online](#).

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Guidance on how to submit your application via RPW Online is available at National Forest: [The Woodland Investment Grant](#)

Eligibility queries relating to the scheme can be sent to NationalForestWales@Gov.Wales

You may use a consultant to prepare your application if you wish. **It is your responsibility to ensure that the application is correctly completed and that the information provided in support of your project is accurate.**

You must follow the Welsh Government guidance and requirements for Competitive Tendering & Procurement Technical Guidance Notes via the following:

[Competitive Tendering and Public Procurement - Technical Guidance Notes](#)

[Competitive Tendering and Public Procurement - Register and Record](#)

Completing the application

You must complete the application in full and provide comprehensive documentation in support of the application to enable Welsh Government to assess the project. Please ensure you follow the guidance as failure to do so may delay the appraisal.

The plans and documents that you are required to complete and submit include:

- The Woodland Investment Grant Scheme Online Application.
- Details of land ownership or full management control. If the land is leased duration of and time left on the lease with a minimum of 20 years left.
- Woodland management plan.*

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- Woodland creation plan, if relevant.*
- Three quotes for each investment item (only one quote required for items under £5,000).
- Three years of certified accounts, if available.
- Details of all permits and consents and evidence these have been issued or applied for, if relevant.

*The woodland plans need to be appropriate to the size and scale of the project and in line with the requirements of the UKFS. Whilst you may develop your own plans, further information on management plans is available on the [NRW website](#) and a template is available on request by emailing NRW: fellinglicence@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk.

The assessment will not commence until the application and ALL of the supporting documentation has received by the Welsh Government. You are able to provide other documentation and evidence in addition to the above to support your application.

Working with partners

If you are working with partners to deliver the project, you must detail this in the application and the role they are providing.

The selection process

The applications received will be in direct competition with one another. Each project will be assessed initially on its value for money, the fit with the long-term vision for the National Forest, deliverability by 31 March 2022 and the long-term sustainability of the woodlands. The selection process will confirm all of the selection criteria have been satisfactorily met:

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Need for activity:

- the outputs are required and will deliver against the measure outputs;
- it adds to and does not displace and/or unnecessarily duplicate existing activity.

Need for funding:

- it cannot proceed now without support;
- the costs are not excessive for the nature of the activity involved;
- there is a funding gap, where applicable.

Ability to deliver:

- viability of the individual or business;
- legal compliance;
- financial viability of project and sustainability;
- support and commitment of key stakeholders;
- project management, monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

The greater the contribution that the project can make to the appropriate National Forest objectives and outcomes the more likely it is to be recommended for selection.

Stage 1 criteria

In stage 1, all applications will be assessed against a set of selection criteria and scored using a scoring scale of 0 – 4, then multiplied by the associated weighting factor to give a total score.

The applications will be ranked in order of merit. Projects will be selected in ranked order until either the funds available have been allocated or the maximum number of applications has been reached. There is no guarantee that

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all of the funds will be allocated or that the maximum number of projects will be selected for stage 2 of the process.

Details of the selection criteria are set out below.

Selection criteria	Business/Project Plan criteria to be assessed for selection	Score	Weighting factor
Value for Money	Value for Money	0 – 4*	x 2
Sustainable Development	Strategic Fit	0 – 4	x 3
Woodland enhancement, creation and connectivity	Delivery	0 – 4	x 2
Operational Approach	Long Term Sustainability	0 – 4	x 1

*derived from the score received for the other selection criteria (see below)

No application will progress which scores less than the minimum quality threshold of 8. A score of 0 in any of the selection criteria will prevent the application from being considered for selection for stage 2 of the process.

For each criterion, the assessment will be made on the basis of the information and explanations given.

Higher scores will be achieved by providing comprehensive explanations supported by examples of proposed activities and details of how those activities will be managed.

Lower scores will be achieved by giving explanations that are simply statements of intent, for example, “we will hold meetings with stakeholders on a regular

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basis throughout the project”.

Value for Money – Value for Money

Projects are required to provide value for money. Projects will be ranked against other applications in the window on the basis of the scores achieved against the other 3 criteria (a), divided by the requested grant value (b).

A project which scores a max score of 24 (a), i.e. 4 for each of the other 3 criteria multiplied by the weighting, requesting the min grant of £10k (b) would have an a/b value (24/10) of 2.4.

A project which scores a min score of 6 (a), 1 for each of the other 3 criteria multiplied by the weighting, requesting the max grant of £250k (b) would have an a/b value (6/250) of 0.024.

a/b values for all projects in the window will be ranked in numeric order and scores allocated as shown below.

Score Description

4	Score for other 3 criteria / grant (a/b) is the top 0 - 25% of applications.
3	Score for other 3 criteria / grant (a/b) is the top 26 - 50% of applications.
2	Score for other 3 criteria / grant (a/b) is the top 51 – 75% of applications.
1	Score for other 3 criteria / grant (a/b) is the top 76 - 100% of applications.
0	A project scores 0 against any of the other 3 criteria.

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Sustainable Development – Strategic Fit

For a project to meet the scheme Strategic Fit, you need to demonstrate a commitment to the National Forest vision. For example, how will the project deliver against the three essential outcomes and ideally one or more of the desirable outcomes of the National Forest. On a strategic scale, the project will need to evidence the long term aims and aspirations of the woodland and in time demonstrate how it will connect to a larger ecosystem across Wales. Projects also need to demonstrate how they fit with the three cross cutting themes: climate change, tourism and economy, skills and learning and how the Welsh language and heritage will be promoted.

Score Description

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4 | A clear explanation of how 5 or more of the National Forest outcomes (3 essential and 2 or more highly desirable) are addressed (split between those already met and those in need of improvement). Evidence of ongoing improvements and maintenance provided in a management plan. |
| 3 | A clear explanation of how 4 of the National Forest outcomes (3 essential and 1 highly desirable outcome) are addressed (split between those already met and those in need of improvement). Evidence of ongoing improvements and maintenance provided in a management plan. |
| 2 | A clear explanation of how the 3 essential National Forest outcomes are addressed (split between those already met, and those in need of improvement). Evidence of ongoing improvements and maintenance provided in a management plan. |
| 1 | An explanation of how the 3 essential National Forest outcomes are addressed (split between those already met and those in need of improvement). Evidence of |
-

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Score Description

ongoing improvements and maintenance provided in a management plan.

0 Insufficient evidence has been provided.

Woodland enhancement, creation and connectivity - Delivery

This is defined as a new project to enhance or expand an existing woodland or create a new woodland that adds to the National Forest vision of a connected ecosystem across Wales. The project must demonstrate additionality, be clearly defined, demonstrate the level of evidence against the outcomes and reference how you have consulted with areas statements, local nature partnership representative and NRW if required. Projects should have all regulatory permissions in place before applying for funding. However, we will consider applications where you are confident they will be in place given a little more time and before the project commences.

Score Description

4 A clear explanation of the project is given, with evidence of research undertaken and how the project supports the National Forest vision. Strong evidence that the relevant delivery mechanisms are in place and the project will be delivered in 2021/22 e.g. regulatory permissions have been obtained, so high confidence in delivery.

3 A clear explanation of the project is given, with evidence of research undertaken and how the project supports the National Forest vision. Good evidence that the

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Score Description

relevant delivery mechanisms are in place and the project will be delivered in 2021/22.

2 A clear explanation of the project is given, with evidence of research undertaken and how the project supports the National Forest vision. Satisfactory evidence that the relevant delivery mechanisms are in place and the project will be delivered in 2021/22.

1 A clear explanation of the project is given, with some evidence of research undertaken and how the project supports the National Forest vision. Limited evidence that the relevant delivery mechanisms are in place and the project will be delivered in 2021/22.

0 The project is not clearly explained and there is insufficient evidence.

Operational Approach – Long Term Sustainability

Projects that have a clear long-term plan for the woodland, taking into account the principles of the UKFS, will be a priority because they will add value to the long term vision for the National Forest. Evidence includes plans for maintaining, if not further improving the woodland in line with the National Forest outcomes, both in terms of the woodland itself and infrastructure supporting public access (such as a commitment to maintain footpaths for at least 20 years). Details of land ownership and if leased evidence there is a long-term agreement in place.

Score Description

4 A clear explanation with strong supporting evidence of how the project will result

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Score Description

in a long-term well-managed woodland.

3 A clear explanation with good supporting evidence of how the project will result in a long-term well-managed woodland.

2 A clear explanation with satisfactory supporting evidence of how the project will result in a long-term well-managed woodland.

1 A clear explanation with limited supporting evidence of how the project will result in a long-term well-managed woodland.

0 No or little evidence provided for the long-term sustainability of the woodland.

There are three possible outcomes from the Stage 1 appraisal:

1. Your application is not eligible for the grant;
2. Your application is not selected for stage 2 assessment of the application;
3. Your application is successful at stage 1 for selection and will proceed to full appraisal.

Successful Stage 1 Selection

If your application is selected, you will be notified via your RPW Online account. You must either accept or decline the selection by completing and returning the Application Annex included with your selection notification letter to the Welsh Government via your online account by the date given in your letter.

If you accept selection, your application will progress to Stage 2 of the appraisal process.

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Your selection letter may include an offer to proceed with your project at risk. That is to start your project before a formal offer of grant has been made. The offer to proceed at risk is not a guarantee of offer of grant. If proceeding at risk is made available, further details will be provided at the time.

Unless an offer to proceed at risk is made at selection, **you must not start any work until you have received written confirmation via your RPW Online account by the Welsh Government. Any projects which breach this rule will not be considered for support.**

If you do not accept selection, or do not reply to the Welsh Government by the date in the letter, your application will not progress further and the offer of selection will be withdrawn.

If your application does not meet the scheme eligibility criteria or not selected, you will be notified via your online account.

Stage 2 – Full appraisal of the application following selection

If selected, the application will progress to Stage 2 and the following sections will be assessed to complete the appraisal of the application.

- Financial and Compliance
- Indicators and Outcomes
- Cross Cutting Themes
- Management of Operation
- Suitability of the Investment

The application will be appraised in accordance with the Scheme Guidance and eligibility rules. They will be subject to full due diligence (where required), appraisal and eligibility checks and only at that point will a final decision be taken

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to offer a grant or reject the application. There is no guarantee that a project proposal will be approved for a grant. We will aim to complete the appraisal of the application within 45 days of the window closing. Appraisal of complex applications may take longer. If you delay in replying to requests for further information this will extend the time.

Business/Project Plan

All applications for grant assistance through the National Forest Programme must complete the RPW Online application.

The information provided under each of the headings on the RPW Online application will be assessed against the following rating criteria from which a decision can be taken about the award of grant assistance to the project:

- High: The applicant has provided robust and detailed responses against all of the evidence requirements
- Medium: The applicant has provided satisfactory and detailed responses against most of the evidence requirements
- Low: The applicant has provided potentially incomplete or insufficient responses against one or more of the evidence requirements

The quality threshold is a rating of Medium across all ten categories. If the application does not meet this requirement you may be requested to provide further information.

Please note that if further information is required this may delay the appraisal of the application so we recommend you follow the guidance carefully in order to provide the information requested. However if anything is unclear or we require more information we will contact you.

There are two possible outcomes from Stage 2 appraisal:

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1. Your project is ineligible and is not approved for an award. You will be informed of the reasons why your application was not successful. You may apply again with the same project (amending the application if you wish) **but only if you have not started work.**
2. Your project is eligible and is approved for an award. A contract will be issued to you setting out the terms and conditions of the award via your RPW Online account which you will be asked to accept within 30 days as agreement that you accept the terms and conditions therein. The contract will also provide you with the authority to start work. You will need to accept or decline the offer of contract within 30 days. Failure to accept the contract within 30 days will lead to the contract being withdrawn.

If you decide to withdraw from the contract prior to completing or if you do not complete all of the work approved in your contract, you will not be able to apply for TWIG under any subsequent round and maybe be required to repay any payments received.

Subject to the requirements of the Welsh Government's Code of Practice on Public Access to Information, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004: all information given to the Welsh Government will be treated in strict confidence. You should be aware that if successful, the Welsh Government reserve the right to publish the name of your company, the amount of grant you were awarded and a summary of your project.

Conditions of Grant

The offer of a TWIG grant is made subject to terms and conditions, including those set out below.

Failure to meet the terms and conditions of the award could result in the cancellation of your award and/or the recovery of sums already paid, or a

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reduction of the amount of grant payable.

Conditions:

- Accept a TWIG scheme contract within 30 days of the offer date via RPW Online and adhere to all of the requirements.
- Ensure that you only purchase items listed in your contract after you have accepted the contract offer.
- Ensure that you have purchased all items and completed all works listed in your contract before you submit your claim.
- The award is made on the basis of statements made by you in the application form and subsequent correspondence. The making of false statements is an offence.
- You must not begin any work on the project without first obtaining written authority to do so from Welsh Government.
- You must meet any legal obligations imposed under UK law.
- No alterations may be made to the project, including the location of the activity, without the prior written approval of the Welsh Government.
- No items purchased with grant aid must be disposed of, transferred or sold without the prior written consent of the Welsh Government during the project delivery and for five years from the project end date.
- No land purchased with grant aid must be disposed of, transferred or sold without the prior written consent of the Welsh Government during the project delivery and for at least 20 years from the project end date.
- You must comply with the rules on eligible expenditure.
- Claims must be submitted via the RPW online claim application and supported by all documentary evidence as required by the scheme.
- Claims must be submitted in accordance with the timetable set out in the delivery profile. You must not deviate from the agreed timing and value of your claims without prior written agreement from Welsh Government.
- Projects should be completed within the timetable agreed with Welsh Government. You should not deviate from this without prior written

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agreement from Welsh Government.

- Grants can only be paid on expenditure that has been defrayed, that is, on payments that have cleared from a bank account.
- You must confirm that none of the items covered by the application are replacements under an insurance claim.
- Any publicity given to the project must make reference to the part played by Welsh Government in funding it.
- Records concerning the activity of the business and the delivery of the project, including all original invoices and other related documents such as competitive tenders or quotes, must be retained for at least seven years.
- You must allow representatives of the Welsh Government, the Auditor General for Wales and the Audit Commission to inspect the project. On request, you must provide them with information and/or access to original documentation in relation to the project.

You should be aware that if successful, the Welsh Government reserve the right to publish the name of your company, the amount of grant you were awarded and a summary of your project.

The information provided in the application is subject to the Privacy Notice. The Privacy Notice explains the Welsh Government's processing and use of your personal data and your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Section E: Payment of grant

Claims

You may make interim claims during the period of your project. Guidance notes on how to submit a claim will be available on RPW online once the award is confirmed. Claims will only be paid when the Welsh Government is satisfied the

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relevant expenditure has taken place and that the work has been completed according to plan. Payment will be made by electronic transfer to your bank account.

Final claims for payment of grant should be submitted as soon as possible after the physical work on the project has been completed and by 31 March 2022. Failure to submit claims may result in the grant paid to date being recovered.

During the lifetime of the grant, when claims are submitted, they may be scrutinised to ensure expenditure is eligible and in line with that approved in the original application. On completion of the physical works, the project site will be visited and a detailed assessment of the project undertaken.

Incorrect claims

You have a responsibility to make sure that each claim submitted is arithmetically correct; that it is only for defrayed expenditure (the money has gone from your bank account); that all the items and costs are eligible and that the claim is on time.

It is essential that if you have any doubts about anything that you need for your project that you obtain written confirmation of its eligibility **before you incur the costs**.

Section F: Monitoring of projects

It is a requirement that the progress of your project is monitored and its success evaluated following completion. You will be asked to provide regular updates on its progress and three months following completion, a final report on its performance, when the project will be evaluated against the objectives and

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targets set out in the approved application. If the project should fail to meet these targets and, on the basis of progress actually made, would not have qualified for grant aid under the scheme, action may be taken to recover the grant paid.

It will be a requirement of the grant award that equipment purchased with the aid of a TWIG grant must be kept in situ, operational and in good repair, and used for the same purpose as set out in the original application, for at least five years from the date of completion of the project as set out in the approval letter. Similarly, any land purchased with grant aid must not be disposed of, transferred or sold without the prior written consent of the Welsh Government during the project delivery and for at least 20 years from the project end date. This is to ensure the longevity of the project and to guarantee local communities share the project's benefits.

You must allow officials from Welsh Government, or their representatives, to inspect the project at any reasonable time within a five-year period.

End of the Woodland Investment Grant Scheme

All claims must be submitted to the Welsh Government according to the agreed delivery profile and by no later than 31 March 2022.

Section G: Appeals procedure

If an application is rejected, the reasons for rejection will be spelt out clearly. We will be prepared to discuss any modifications which might be needed to make the project acceptable.

Appeals, including supporting evidence, must be received within 60 days of the

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date of the letter outlining the decision you wish to appeal against.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh, and will respond to any correspondence in Welsh if that is your preferred language. This will not lead to delay.

Section H: Complaints procedure

If you consider that we have failed to follow the correct procedure in the handling of your request you may wish to make a complaint in accordance with Welsh Government's Complaints procedure.

Complaints will be dealt with under the Welsh Government's Code of Practice on Complaints. [Make a complaint using our online complaint form or contact us.](#)

You may also choose to contact the [Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#):

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Section I: Privacy notice - Welsh Government grants

How we will handle any personal data you provide in relation to your grant application or request for grant funding.

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The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide in relation to your grant application or request for grant funding. The information will be processed as part of our public task (i.e. exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government) and will help us assess your eligibility for funding.

Before we provide grant funding to you, we undertake checks for the purposes of preventing fraud and money laundering, and to verify your identity. These checks require us to process personal data about you to third party fraud prevention agencies.

If we, or a fraud prevention agency, determine that you pose a fraud or money laundering risk, we may refuse to provide the grant funding you applied for, or we may stop providing existing grant funding to you.

A record of any fraud or money laundering risk will be retained by the fraud prevention agencies, and may result in others refusing to provide services, financing or employment to you.

In order to assess eligibility we may also need to share personal information relating to your application with Regulatory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs, Local Authorities, Health and Safety Executive and the Police.

Your information, including your personal information, may be the subject of a request by another member of the public. When responding to such requests the Welsh Government may be required to release information, including your personal information, to fulfil its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental information Act 2004 or the Data Protection Act 2018.

We will keep personal information contained in files in line with our retention policy. If successful in your application then your personal data will be kept for

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10 years from the conclusion of any aid award. If you are unsuccessful, your details will be kept for one year after the date you provided them.

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to access the personal data the Welsh Government holds on you;
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data;
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing;
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased';
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is the independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:

Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

Email: dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales

Contact details for the **Information Commissioner's Office:**

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

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If you have any queries regarding this privacy statement please contact the RPW Customer Contact Centre.

Contacts

RPW Online

Access the RPW Online service via the [Government Gateway at GOV.UK](#), or [once you have enrolled for the RPW Online service, access it via GOV.WALES](#). If you are not yet registered with RPW Online, please refer to the Welsh Government website for the how to register guidance or call the Customer Contact Centre on 0300 062 5004.

Enquiries – Customer Contact Centre

For all enquiries, please contact the [RPW Customer Contact Centre](#)

Enquiries can be submitted via RPW Online at any time.

Access to Welsh Government offices for people with disabilities or special needs

If you have any special needs which you feel are not met by our facilities contact the Customer Contact Centre on 0300 062 5004. Welsh Government officials will then endeavour to make arrangements to accommodate your requirements.

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Welsh Government website and National Forest Team

View the latest information on the [National Forest for Wales on the Welsh Government website](#).

Eligibility queries relating to the scheme can be sent to the [National Forest Team](#).

Annex 1: National Forest outcomes

The Welsh Government has developed six high level outcomes for the National Forest to meet as a whole. We do not expect every woodland to demonstrate all six outcomes. To be included in the National Forest a woodland must, as a minimum, demonstrate the three essential outcomes. Ideally, the woodland would also demonstrate one or more of the highly desirable outcomes. The purpose of this scheme is to support capital works to help demonstrate the outcomes, so more woodlands can become part of the National Forest in the future, either following this round of funding or subsequent rounds.

National Forest outcomes

Essential outcomes:

- good quality, well designed and managed resilient woodlands
- woodlands accessible to people
- community involvement in woodlands

Highly desirable outcomes:

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- connected woodlands
- dynamic, multi-purpose woodlands and trees
- woodlands that demonstrate learning, research and innovation

Given the high-level nature of the outcomes, you have some discretion in how you demonstrate the woodland already does or will meet them in the future following investment. However, the sort of things Welsh Government might expect to see are set out below.

Essential outcomes	Approach to demonstrating the outcomes
---------------------------	---

Good quality, well designed and managed resilient woodlands	The National Forest will comprise of exemplar woodlands that demonstrate what can be achieved through protecting, enhancing and planting trees and woodland areas, at the same time helping us to address the climate change emergency, reversing the decline in biodiversity and providing places for recreation and employment in some cases.
---	---

	The UK Forestry Standard defines the approach to sustainable forest management in the UK. It applies to all woodland. The standard covers different elements of sustainable forest management including:
--	--

- biodiversity
- climate change
- people
- historic environment
- landscape
- soil
- water

By following the UKFS and through careful planning and design, following the 'right tree in the right place' mantra, the woodlands will meet these objectives and others to ensure they are resilient and future proofed, creating a long term National asset which will be around for future

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Essential outcomes **Approach to demonstrating the outcomes**

generations to enjoy.

Clear management plans will be in place to help the woodland thrive and endure, access routes are maintained etc. delivering the widest possible range of benefits to people and nature. As part of the application, Welsh Government will need to see evidence of:

- a woodland creation plan and future management plan for a new woodland; and
- a management plan for work to existing woodlands.

The plans should give WG confidence the woodland is in line with the UKFS.

In addition, if other standards, certification or awards have already been attained or are being worked towards it would be helpful to know, such as the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) if applicable. This is only desirable information at this stage rather than essential, although providing it could support your case for a grant and ultimately National Forest accreditation.

As part of these plans we would also like to see evidence of wider environmental considerations such as using bio-degradable alternatives to plastic tree guards and ties.

Woodlands accessible to people National Forest woodlands need to be accessible to the public. There will need to be appropriate infrastructure in place to enable and encourage diverse people with different accessibility needs to use the woodlands principally for recreation, but there could also be the opportunity for local enterprises, for example.

As part of the application, Welsh Government will need to see evidence

Essential outcomes **Approach to demonstrating the outcomes**

some or all of the site has open or permissive access, ideally indefinitely, or for a period of time no less than 20 years.

As a minimum, we would expect to see one clear and welcoming entrance with bilingual signage and an accessible footpath.

Ideally, there would also be infrastructure in place to encourage a wide range of visitors and support them through their visit e.g. interpretation boards, nature / educational trails, sculptures, play areas, seating and picnic areas.

A website will also be important, particularly for larger sites to enable people to research and plan their visit and understand what facilities are on site.

Community involvement in woodlands National Forest woodlands need to help communities to re-engage with nature, particularly in urban areas which may lack green spaces.

As part of the application, Welsh Government will need to see evidence efforts have already been made to involve local communities in developing plans for restoring and creating woodlands in their local areas or confidence they will be following the grant award.

Ideally, community involvement would also include opportunities to get involved in the enhancement, creation and management of the woodlands through the setting up of voluntary groups, school groups etc. It may also include things like providing economic opportunities for local communities and working with them to promote the Welsh language, culture and heritage through the site.

Highly desirable outcomes**Approach to demonstrating the outcomes**

Connected woodlands

National Forest woodlands will need to connect in time to create a network across Wales to enable nature to recover and flourish.

As part of the application, Welsh Government will need to see evidence that as existing woodlands are enhanced and new woodlands created, connectivity to other woodlands has been considered and will be part of the project, where feasible. This could include enhancing, expanding and joining up existing woodland habitats with new woodland planting or with landscape corridors such as hedgerows.

However, the Welsh Government appreciates in the early years of the National Forest it may not always be feasible to connect to other woodland areas via trees and plants particularly in urban areas, hence this is a highly desirable outcome, but it will become more feasible as the area of woodland in Wales increases.

Whilst this outcome is primarily concerned with connecting woodlands to support nature, it could also include work to connect woodlands to people. This could be in terms of:

- emotional connectivity to woodlands, helping people to take a real interest in their natural environment; and/ or
- physical connectivity such as connecting woodlands to other woodlands or to where people live via footpaths, cycle paths, public transport etc.

Dynamic, multi-purpose woodlands and trees

National Forest woodlands should aim to maximise the benefits to people, nature and the wider environment through the creation of multi-purpose sites. As part of the application the Welsh Government will need to see evidence the site is used in different ways or is being worked towards, which could include some or all of the following:

Highly desirable outcomes

Approach to demonstrating the outcomes

- recreation;
- tourism;
- educational/ learning opportunities;
- small and medium local level enterprises;
- large scale commercial timber harvesting businesses supplying more home grown timber;
- supporting biodiversity.

The Welsh Government appreciates that not all sites will lend themselves or be appropriate for different uses and may focus on doing somethings really well, which is why this is a highly desirable outcome, rather than essential.

Woodlands that demonstrate learning, research and innovation

National Forest woodlands should demonstrate what can be achieved with multi-purpose woodlands. This could involve:

- learning and building on the work of others;
- testing new ways of working; and
- sharing that innovation, research and learning with others.

The evidence provided to Welsh Government for this outcome could be very broad. Examples may include demonstrating new and different ways of:

- delivering multi-purpose woodlands;
 - engaging local communities in their development and management;
 - action to support biodiversity;
 - providing environmental ecosystem services (e.g. air and water quality, flood and drought protection);
 - ensuring resilience to future climate change (e.g. tree selection and right tree in the right place); and
 - providing educational opportunities (e.g. forest schools).
-

Annex 2: Woodland plans and consents checklist

The table below highlights the woodland plans, planning permission and environmental consents that maybe required for your project. At the time of applying to TWIG we would expect all of those that are needed to be in place or well underway. If you are not at this stage, technical support may be available via Natural Resources Wales – see table below. The National Forest Team can also be contacted at: NationalForestWales@Gov.Wales.

No.	For project to proceed please check the following items	Yes	No
1	Is a Woodland Management Plan in place (mandatory requirement for TWIG)?	Please provide a copy.	You will need create one in line with UKFS requirements or use the guidance and template developed by NRW which is available on request by emailing: fellinglicence@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
2	As part of your Woodland Management Plan, is a felling	Please provide a copy and explain how it links to your application. To obtain a felling licence refer to	No action required.

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No.	For project to proceed please check the following items	Yes	No
	licence required?	Natural Resources Wales/ Tree felling licences.	
3	Is a Woodland Creation plan required?	Please provide a copy. If not in place yet, you will need to create one in line with UKFS.	No action required.
4	Is an Environment Impact Assessment required?	Please provide a copy of your consent. If not in place yet, please apply for one. Guidance is available here: Natural Resources Wales/ Environmental Impact Assessment for forestry activity	No action required.
5	Is planning permission required?	Please provide a copy. If not in place yet, please	No action required.

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No.	For project to proceed please check the following items	Yes	No
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refer to the relevant local planning authority guidance and timescales.

6	Are any other permits/licences/consents required? e.g. Protected Species Licence	Please provide copies. For further guidance, see: Natural Resources Wales/ When you need to apply for a protected species licence	No action required.
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