

Operations Note 029

Updated: 20 March 2014

EWGS and RDPE Transition

1 Purpose

This operations note explains how Forestry Commission England intends to handle English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) business during the transition from the current programme (2007-2013) to the new programme (2014-2020).

2 Context

Defra Ministers have confirmed what they intend to offer during the 2014 transition year, prior to the start of the next Rural Development Programme (RDP). Ministers want to offer a package of Rural Development Programme support in the transition between programmes in 2014 that reflects the likely need to target funding more in the new programme and that avoids building up excessive commitments now.

Ministers have also committed to fund 2000ha of woodland creation in 2014/15.

The following arrangements take into account the rules of the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) from 1 January 2016.

The following arrangements also take into account and are constantly subject to budget availability.

3 Key Points

- Significantly high levels of demand for EWGS;
- Resulting in limited budget availability and requirement to maintain funds for priority grant types (Plant Health WRG, Plant Health WIG, WPG, WAG and WCG);
- Greater clarity of new RDP rules;
- Details below are subject to ongoing budget review and further restrictions.

4 Grant Types

Woodland Management Grant (WMG)

Now closed to new business. Cases currently being processed must be approved by 15 May 2014.

Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG's)

New Applications:

Public Access WIG's: now closed for new applications.

Woodfuel WIG: Currently open for 14/15 and 15/16 claim years

Other WIG's:

- 14/15 claim year only available for Plant Health issues;
- 15/16 claim year open but with in-year claim deadlines – new programme ineligible activities to be claimed by 30 September 2015; new programme eligible items to be claimed by 31 March 2016 (see Appendix 1 and 2 for details and lists of eligible and ineligible items);
- 16/17 claim year and beyond not available for new business;

Work in Progress (Applications received and in GLOS by 10 March, 2014)

- These applications will continue to be processed but non plant health applications for 14/15 will have to move to 15/16 and will have to meet the claim deadlines for ineligible items.
- 16/17 and 17/18 can proceed but only for eligible items (public access not classed as an eligible item)

Amendments

- Requests for items to be amended within agreements will result in those requests, relative to those items, being treated as new applications

FC approved Management Plans will be required to support first claims from the 1 April 2015 and any claim from the 1 January 2016.

Woodland Regeneration Grant (WRG)

New Applications:

- 14/15 claim year only available for restocking in response to Plant Health issues;
- 15/16 claim year only available for restocking in response to Plant Health issues;
- 16/17 claim year and beyond not available for new business.

Work in Progress (Applications received and in Glos by 10 March, 2014):

- Applications will continue to be processed but 14/15 non plant health applications will have to move to 15/16 as the ONLY available claim year.

Amendments:

- Requests for items to be amended within agreements will result in those requests, relative to those items, being treated as new applications

FC approved Management Plans will be required to support first claims from the 1 April 2015 and any claim from the 1 January 2016.

Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) and Farm Woodland Payments (FWP)

WCG

- Currently closed for new applications;
- We will take stock in April of the need to offer a further window for applications to ensure we achieve the desired target of 2,000ha of planting in 2014/15. Experience tells us that around 35% of approved schemes either do not take place or are deferred to a later year (e.g. due to bad weather during the planting season). Therefore, we will be unable to establish a final picture for 2014/15 until April. **It is important that applicants notify us promptly if they intend to abandon, or wish to amend the claim year of, approved schemes.** This will allow us to make maximum use of the funds available;
- We will open an application window for new woodland creation applications for the 2015/16 season in early 2015, when the new programme has been approved.

FWP

Applicants are reminded that in order to receive farm woodland payments that we need to receive your claim for 1st instalment of woodland creation grant by 30 September 2015.

Woodland Planning Grant (WPG)

- Currently open for 14/15 and 15/16 claim years.

Management Plan Requirement

- All funding for existing woodlands under the next Rural Development Programme will be dependent on having in place a Forestry Commission approved management plan;
- FC approved management plans will be required to support first claims for WRG and WIG after the 1 April 2015;

- FC approved management plans will be required to support any claims for WRG and WIG from the 1 January 2016.

2013-14 current year claims

- It is important that current year claims are received by 31 March 2014;
- Request to reschedule from 13/14 can only be accommodated in 14/15 if they are for WCG, WPG or plant health related;
- Those claims not received on time may not be allowed.

Amendments

- Any requests to amend currently approved contracts to a different claim year will result in the amendment being considered under the new application rules outlined above;
- It is imperative that if you are considering amending your claim year then you contact us as soon as possible so we can outline the implications and whether or not it will be acceptable.

5 Transition Table

| Grant type | Current contracts | New applications / approvals | Claims from 01/01/2014 | 2014 applications* | Comments |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| EWGS -WAG | Continue to term | Continue until September 2014 | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | Yes | |
| EWGS -WPG | Continue to term | Continue until September 2014 | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | Yes | New management plan templates now available |
| EWGS -WMG | Continue to term | Closed for new applications | Contracts approved by 15/05/2014 continue to term | No | Closed |

| Grant type | Current contracts | New applications / approvals | Claims from 01/01/2014 | 2014 applications* | Comments |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|--------------------|--|
| EWGS –WIG | Continue to term | Continue until September 2014 | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | Yes | 14/15 claim year now reserved for plant health WIG's only. Open for 15/16 No offer for 16/17 and beyond Claims beyond 30 September 2015 will need to be eligible items (Appendix1) Applications with claims in 15/16 will require a management plan. |
| EWGS -WIG Wood-fuel | Claims required by 30/09/2015 | Continue until September 2014 | Continue until 30/09/2015 | Yes | Currently open for 14/15 and 15/16 claim years Claims required by end of September 2015 |
| EWGS -WRG | Continue to term | Continue until September 2014 | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | Yes | Plant health related agreements only for 14/15 and 15/16 No offer for 16/17 and beyond Claims from 15/16 onwards will require a management plan |
| EWGS -WCG | Continue to term | Continue to approve those schemes already in GLOS. See comments column re new application windows. | 1 st WCG claims required before 30/09/2015 to be eligible for FWP Second and subsequent claims okay | Currently Closed | Applications now closed. Possible new application window in 2014 - see key points above. There will be an application window early 2015 for 15/16 claim year. |

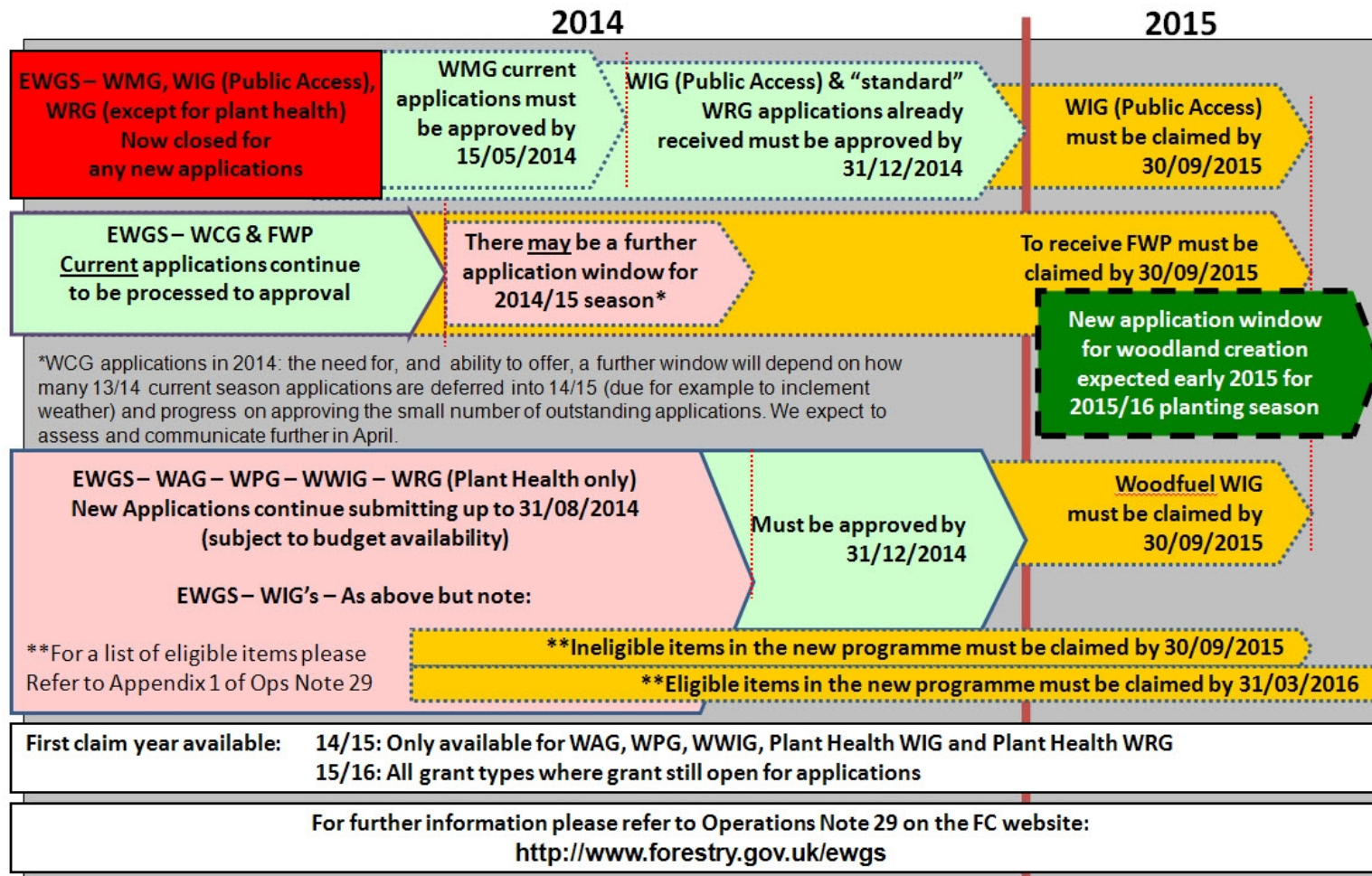
| Grant type | Current contracts | New applications / approvals | Claims from 01/01/2014 | 2014 applications* | Comments |
|------------------------|-------------------|--|---|--------------------|--|
| FWP | Continue to term | FWP will be unavailable if first claim for WCG is not received by 30/09/2015 | 1 st WCG claims required before 30/09/2015 to be eligible for FWP Second and subsequent claims okay | N/A | FWP will be unavailable if first claim for WCG is not received by 30/09/2015 |
| FWS/ FWPS legacy | Continue to term | N/A | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | No | Successions handled as normal |
| WGS | Continue to term | N/A | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | No | Scheme unaffected by RDPE transition |
| Dedication | Continue to term | N/A | Claims will be processed using existing timescales and procedures | No | Scheme unaffected by RDPE transition |

*** 2014 applications subject to normal budget management**

The chart below provides a timeline for RDPE transition and is correct as of February 2014.



RDPE Transition – overall picture v10



6 Sources of further advice

The [Grants and Regulations website](#) contains all the information you need to apply for grant support. Alternatively, you can request this information from your local [Forestry Commission office](#).

You can subscribe to email notifications of significant grant, regulatory and tree health updates by contacting us at: grnationalteam@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

7 Versions

Version 1 issued 14 November 2012

Version 2 issued 9 August 2013

Version 3 issued 14 December 2013

Version 4 issued 10 January 2014

Version 5 issued 10 March 2014

Version 6 issued 20 March 2014

Appendix 1 – 15/16 Eligible WIG Standard Costs

The list below shows those standard costs currently available within EWGS that will remain as eligible items under the new programme. Such items can be claimed up until 31 March 2016

Biodiversity

B1 Small Pond Creation

B2 Bird Box

Mammal Management

C6 Deer High Seat

Tree Establishment

E1, E2 Supply of plants

E4-E7 Supply and plant tree and shelter

G5, G6 Drainage

C8 Vole Guards

Fencing

F1-F15 All fencing options except F16 (removal)

Vegetation Management

V1-V4 Scrub management

V7 Asulox application

V8 Stump treatment

V9-V10a Coppicing

V15-V18a Rhododendron removal

V20 Woodland hedge management

V21 Tree pollarding

Special Funds

Z1 Special fund (this can only be used in line with revised plant health WIG guidance due for release in March).

Phytophthora X Funds

X2 – X8 Phytophthora Rhododendron clearance.

Chalara Plant Health WIG

Still eligible – will be merged into revised plant health WIG guidance due for release in March.

Appendix 2 – 15/16 Non-Eligible WIG Standard Costs

The list below shows those standard costs currently available within EWGS that will not be eligible under the new programme rules. Such items will need to be claimed before the 30th September 2015 to receive payment.

Public Access

A1-A28 We are hoping to fund public access in the new programme using an actual cost.

Mammal Management

C1-C5 Squirrel control will be dealt with in the new programme using the multi-annual element of Woodland Improvement Grant.

C7 Deer control will be dealt with in the new programme using the multi-annual element of Woodland Improvement Grant.

Tree Establishment

E8 Respacing natural regeneration – no similar option.

Fencing

F16 Fence Removal – no similar option.

Harvesting

H1-H3 There are currently no plans to offer grant for uneconomic thinning.

Labour and Machinery

L1-L7 Under the rules of the new programme we are not allowed to pay, under capital items, for any time related activity.

Vegetation Management

V11-V14 Ride management and mowing will be dealt with in the new programme using the multi-annual element of Woodland Improvement Grant.

V19 Ride Management – as above for V11-V14.

Special Funds

Z2 Special fund - £100 cost – no similar option.



**English Woodland Grant
Scheme**



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The scheme is supported with European Union and Defra funding