

9.1 FUNDING OF BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

The successful implementation of the biodiversity enhancement measures outlined in this report will require the commitment of adequate financial resources from the Health Trusts. The following sources of funding are available to the Health Trusts and/or community non-governmental organisations for biodiversity enhancement on the sites.

9.1.1 Forestry Grants

Grants for woodland habitat management and creation - grants for woodland planting, regeneration and other management practices are available administered by Forest Service Northern Ireland part funded by the European Union (Council Regulation 1257/1999).

The Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) offers grants towards the costs of establishing new woodland and management of existing woodland. The scheme is wide-ranging in order to encourage multiple use forestry.

The aims of the scheme are to encourage the creation of new woodlands and forest to:

- Increase wood production.
- Improve the landscape.
- Improve woodland biodiversity.
- Offer opportunities for recreation and sport.
- To encourage the sustainable management of forests and woodlands including their well-timed regeneration particularly looking after the needs of ancient and semi-natural woodlands.
- To provide jobs and improve the economy of rural areas and other areas with few sources of economic activity.
- To provide a use for land as an alternative to agriculture.

It is a requirement of the Forest Service that all planting and woodland management must be in accordance with good silvicultural practice as determined by the UK Forestry Standard and accompanying guidelines. Under this scheme, woodlands must be at least 0.2 ha and at least 20m wide. Where nature conservation is a significant aim, the species which are or

might have been native to the site will be preferred. Woody shrubs such as hazel, hawthorn and holly may be eligible for grant (up to a limit of 10% of the total area grant aided) provided that they are both ecologically appropriate. The different types of payments that are available under the Woodland Grant Scheme are:

- Establishment Grants - Establishment grants are designed to assist new planting, restocking and natural regeneration. In addition, for new planting, enclosed land supplement (where new planting is carried out on land which was previously enclosed and improved for agricultural purposes and community woodland supplement (to encourage the creation of new woodlands close to towns and cities which can be used for informal public recreation are also available. Proposals must be within 5 miles of the edge of a town or city and in an area where the opportunities for woodland recreation are limited. The establishment grant is paid after the initial planting has been satisfactorily completed.
- Annual Maintenance Grant – this is paid after 5 years (provided that the appropriate conditions are met).
- A Woodland Improvement Grant – This is a one-off capital payment to encourage a range of work in existing woodlands in order to bring the woodland back into active and sustainable management. It is a discretionary payment of 50% of the agreed eligible work. In situations where further operational investment is required, sustainable operations grant can be paid. The minimum area is 1ha per application.
- Woodland Biodiversity Project Grant – This is a grant paid for work to assist woodland owners to manage their woods in ways that will contribute to Northern Ireland targets within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (e.g. restoration of the Mixed ashwoods at Knockbracken Healthcare Park and the Wet woodland at Gransha Hospital may qualify for this grant). In particular grants will be paid where the work proposed helps achieve the expansion, maintenance and enhancement or restoration targets set out in the native woodland habitat action plans or benefits the habitats of those woodland species covered by the species action plans (e.g. Red squirrel).

Farm Woodland Grant Scheme (for areas >1 ha) - This scheme is designed to encourage the creation of new woodlands on farms. Its objectives are to enhance the environment through the planting of farm woodlands by improving the landscape, providing new habitats

and increasing biodiversity and to provide farmers with ongoing income through annual payments to compensate for agricultural income foregone. For this scheme the application requires the submission of a farm survey number associated with any of the fields, and an associated farm map. The scheme attracts an annual payment. Letting land to another person for these purposes on a short-term basis (e.g. conacre) where the landowner retains some responsibility for the management of the land is also considered to be an agricultural business and therefore eligible for the scheme. Application can be made by the owner of the land or by a tenant provide that all parties are joined in the application.

Details of the above forestry schemes including additional obligations upon signing up to the schemes are outlined in the publication Woodland Grant Scheme/Farm Woodland Grant Scheme Information Booklet available from Forest Service Northern Ireland Headquarters, Dundonald House, Belfast. An additional obligation prior to joining the schemes could include the preparation of an environmental impact assessment depending on the planting area and location to designated areas.

9.1.2 Agri-environment Grants

The Countryside Management Scheme, launched in 1999, was developed with the primary aim to maintain and enhance biodiversity and is open to all farmers and landowners outside Environmentally Sensitive Areas. Where funding is limited, entry into the scheme is competitive, being based on who can offer the greatest environmental benefits. The scheme adopts a whole farm approach in other words all eligible land must be entered into the scheme. The scheme offers an annual payment in return for integrating positive environment management into farming practices. Participants must follow the management requirements for all farm habitats (e.g. species-rich grassland, breeding wader sites, farm scrub/woodland and parkland) and/or optional habitats (e.g. field boundary restoration, grass margins planted with native trees, arable options, lapwing sites and fallow plots, and winter sites for swans and geese) follow general environmental requirements, attend locally-based agri-environment scheme workshops on cross-compliance and good farming practice, field boundary management and dealing with farm wastes, environmental legislation, nutrient management planning, water quality, habitats and heritage features. They must also manage all field boundaries, and produce and implement a farm waste management plan.

Annual management payments compensate for loss of income and costs incurred associated with adhering to the management requirements of the scheme. In addition to an annual management grant, funding is available for capital enhancement works to meet the management requirements of the scheme and to enhance the farm landscape including field boundary restoration, tree planting/management, items to enhance wildlife value (e.g. nestboxes for birds, bat boxes and red squirrel feeders), provision of alternative watering troughs, structures/work to raise water levels, creation of scrapes, restoration of traditional and heritage features of historical interest, erection of protective fencing provision of plastic recycling bins. Land held under a leasing agreement from the Health Trust can be entered into the scheme. But the tenancy agreement/lease must permit the lessee to manage the land under the terms of the scheme for at least 5 years.

9.1.3 Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund

Awards for All Northern Ireland, is supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Big Lottery Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland. Grants of between £500 and £10,000 are awarded for people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community. More information on this grant scheme can be obtained from <http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/northernireland/index.html>.

Breathing Places involves a host of wildlife and conservation organisations working with the BBC to inspire a million people to get involved in creating and caring for thousands of wildlife-friendly green spaces in their local area. Any voluntary or community sector organisation with experience of working the natural environment, or working in partnership with an organisation with this experience can apply for a Lottery funded Breathing Places grant. The Big Lottery Fund has committed £5 million to the Breathing Places grants programme to help develop existing breathing places or create new ones. A wide range of grants is available from the Big Lottery Fund of between £300 and £10,000 for improving or creating a public space – which can be anything from a community forest, park, local nature reserve or community garden – but it, must be open to the public.

9.1.4 Environment and Heritage Service Natural Heritage Grants

EHS provides small grants for biodiversity projects under its Natural Heritage Grants Programme. The programme aims to 'encourage the conservation and enhancement of key elements of the environment and its wildlife, and the provision of facilities which help as wide a range of people as possible to enjoy and appreciate our natural heritage' (details of this grant scheme can be viewed at <http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/natural/grant/grant.shtml>).

9.1.5 Other Sources of Funding

There are other private trusts that give grants for biodiversity enhancement measures each with their own criteria that must be satisfied before a project will qualify for a grant. Trusts that give grants in Northern Ireland include:

- The Charles Hayward Foundation (www.charleshaywardfoundation.org.uk)
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)
- GlaxoSmithKline UK Community Partnerships (www.gsk.com/community)
- Naturesave Policies Ltd Naturesave Trust (www.naturesave.co.uk)
- Rufford Foundation (www.rufford.org)
- Tubney Charitable Trust (www.tubney.org.uk)