

Scottish Government Rural Payments & Inspections Directorate (SGRPID) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

Forestry Commission Scotland legacy grant schemes: changes in payment arrangements - some questions and answers

Summary

The following Q&A explains important changes to the way claims for existing Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS) customers will be paid from 16 October 2007.

The key points are:

- **From 16 October 2007**, all WGS and SFGS payments part-funded by the EC will be made by the Scottish Government and only through Bankers Automated Clearing System (BACS);
- **From 16 October 2008**, all WGS and SFGS payments part-funded by the EC will be made only to those businesses which are registered under the Integrated Administration Control System (IACS) and whose land is also IACS registered.

Questions and Answers

1. Which grant schemes are we talking about?

The WGS and SFGS grant schemes that are now closed to new applications. We refer to these schemes as "legacy" grant schemes and their "legacy payments". Grant claims for Dedication schemes are not affected by these changes.

2. Which grant payments are affected?

Payments under a WGS or SFGS contract part-funded by the EC. This means WGS and SFGS contracts that contain a combination of new planting, restocking and management or stewardship activities. Send the claim form to your FCS Conservancy office as normal.

WGS and SFGS contracts that contain restocking operations only (for example SFGS Forest Plan restocking areas) are not affected. Similarly, send the claim form to your FCS Conservancy office as normal. You do not need to register with IACS to make these claims.

3. What are the changes and time scales?

From 16 October 2007, SGRPID will take over responsibility for all EC part funded legacy payments to beneficiaries. From that date those grant payments can be made only to a nominated bank account through the BACS system. To ensure that we get a consistency in approach and procedures we will also make our payments only through the BACS system.

If you have received our BACS form to get your account details, complete this and return it as soon as you can so that we can get your details into our grant payments system. If you have not received a BACS form but need to complete one, please contact alex.dale@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or give him a ring on 0131-314-6155

In addition, from 16 October 2008 you must register your land under the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) in order to make a claim for FCS legacy grant scheme payments. IACS is the system of control developed to administer EC grants under the Common Agricultural Policy. All businesses that receive support under the Scotland Rural

Development Programme (SRDP) need to be IACS registered. Part of IACS registration is the allocation to the business of a unique Business Reference Number (BRN). The BRN is the unique reference, used by businesses which apply for any of the SRDP measures. The land is registered on the SIACS Field Identification System (FIS).

4. How do I register land before 16 October 2008 deadline?

You will need to complete SGRPID's Land and Business Change form and submit that to your local SGRPID office, together with a scale map. You can get one from your local SGRPID Area Office. All land that you occupy and either own or hold under a secure tenancy agreement must be registered at the same time if you are planning to claim Single Farm Payment or receive support under the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) on any area of it.

5. What forest land requires to be IACS registered by 16 October 2008?

All land covered by a WGS or SFGS contract, that is not already registered by your existing participation in an IACS scheme, and where there are still EU part-funded payment claims outstanding. Land under a WGS Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS) or a SFGS Farmland Premium (FP) agreement will be registered already for IACS purposes and, so, there is no requirement to re-register.

6. Why do I have to register this land?

It is a legal requirement under the Rural Development Regulation for SGRPID to make checks on where grant aid has been spent and also to ensure that it has been used for the agreed purposes.

7. I am a tenant. Who registers the woodland, is it me or the landlord?

If the woodland is part of your lease and you are the scheme participant then it is you who registers the woodland and not your landlord.

8. Do I have to register land with SGRPID if all my scheme payments will be paid before 16 October 2008?

No, you do not need to carry out IACS registration unless you will be in receipt of further payments from 16 October 2008.

9. When it comes to registering my land, I have already provided a map to the FCS with my original WGS/SFGS. Is this not acceptable?

Unfortunately not, in order to register your land, you must satisfy new mapping requirements.

10. Rather than go through this exercise would it not be simpler if the FCS continued to make these payments?

This is not possible as it is an EC requirement that there is one Paying Agency per country and for Scotland that paying agency is SGRPID. The FCS will not be legally permitted to make EC co-financed payments after 15 October 2007.

11. What progress has been made with transferring the legacy scheme payments to SGRPID?

We have completed the first stage of the project on time and have made two payment "runs" in November and December to issue legacy payments directly to bank accounts. The next payment run will be in early January following the Christmas and New Year holiday. We are planning to shorten the interval between payment runs and are aiming to make these a fortnightly event.

We are continuing to work closely with the SGRPID team on the second stage of the project to ensure the systems we must develop to give them the information they need to make all payments from October 2008 are completed on time.