Forestry Commission Scotland
Guidance on Woodland Creation by Natural Regeneration
Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities

What is this about?

This guidance is for case officers, applicants, landowners and managers and their agents. The purpose is to provide advice on the eligibility criteria for creating naturally regenerated native woodland under Woodland Creation Options under Rural Priorities.

Background
Proposals to expand native woodlands by natural regeneration will only be considered where there is a high prospect of achieving the required density of trees over the proposed area and within the contract period. Natural regeneration is therefore unlikely to be appropriate as a means of creating expansive areas of new woodlands.

Success in creating new native woodland through natural regeneration relies on the proximity and quality of a suitable seed source and/or advanced regeneration held in check by browsing. Seeding density declines rapidly by distance from its source, with areas beyond 50-100 metres unlikely to be averaging the required minimum.

Eligibility Criteria

- The Proposal should include a survey demonstrating the location of an adequate seed source and the presence of advanced regeneration at sufficient density to demonstrate that regeneration at the required minimum average stocking* level of 1100 trees per hectare is achievable within the contract period.

- Before submitting the initial grant claim for natural regeneration, the regeneration must be at a minimum average stocking of 1100 trees per hectare over at least 75% of the grant-aided area with species native to locality, average over 0.3m in height, be healthy, and in a condition capable of continued growth subject to normal ongoing maintenance operations such as protection from inappropriate grazing by wild or domestic animals.

- When submitting the initial grant claim for natural regeneration, you must map all areas >0.25ha of successful and unsuccessful regeneration. For each separate area of successful regeneration you should provide a figure for the average stocking density. The average stocking density within any separate area must exceed 300 trees per hectare and collectively for the total area of regeneration must average a minimum of 1100 trees per hectare.
Timescale for Natural Regeneration

- A formal site inspection should be carried out at year 4 to assess the success of natural regeneration and agree future management of the site.

- Where natural regeneration is unlikely to meet the stocking and height requirements, within the contract period and some additional time is required, a further period of 2 years will normally be agreed.

In the expansion of SAC and SSSI woodlands a further period of up to 5 years will be agreed.

- If natural regeneration has not reached the minimum stocking densities by the above time periods, the owner will be expected to stock the area by planting. Otherwise, the cost of any grant-aided fencing will be liable for grant reclaim. The planting would be eligible for grant aid at the rate for the natural regeneration option.

*stocking density may include variable spacing throughout to achieve a minimum average stocking density of 11 00 trees per hectare over the whole stocked area.

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