

# NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME MANUAL

JULY 2012



Since its launch in November 2001, the Forest Service has received regular feedback on the NeighbourWood Scheme from local councils, community groups, woodland owners and foresters. The Forest Service greatly appreciates this feedback and uses it to further enhance and streamline the scheme as part of its ongoing development.

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The Forest Service supports the Leave No Trace Code of Outdoor Ethics. See [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org) for details.

## Foreword



As Minister of State with responsibility for forestry, I am delighted to announce the re-opening of the NeighbourWood Scheme grant package. The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine operates a number of grant schemes aimed at supporting various types of forestry and woodland activity. However, this particular scheme is unique, as it is aimed specifically at realising the recreational and wider social benefits woodlands and forests can provide.

The NeighbourWood Scheme is all about bringing communities and woodlands together, by helping local councils and others to create 'close-to-home' woodland amenities in partnership with communities, for local people to use and enjoy. These 'neighbourwoods' vary greatly in size and location, from forests in the countryside and on the outskirts of our villages, towns and cities, to woodlands located in our more built-up areas. Often what sets these forests apart is the level of local enthusiasm and support for their development as a local amenity – neighbourwoods invariably become a focus for real local partnerships involving people from all walks of life intent on enhancing their local area and environment. These neighbourwoods become part of the local identity and 'sense of place', and the benefits they create are enjoyed by local people.

These benefits are numerous and far-reaching. Neighbourwoods provide accessible opportunities for recreation and regular exercise, and offer people contact with the natural world and the changing seasons. They promote health and well-being, and provide a place for family and friends to come together and relax. They provide a venue for a wide range of community and sporting events, and represent an ideal 'outdoor classroom' for local school children to learn about nature and the environment. Neighbourwoods also deliver a wide range of environmental benefits, providing vital habitats for wildlife, removing atmospheric carbon, promoting air quality and improving the visual landscape, to mention just a few.

The NeighbourWood Scheme complements the work of local councils throughout Ireland in providing local amenities, and a host of other initiatives focused on forest and countryside recreation in Ireland, such as the continued provision of quality forest recreational opportunities by Coillte and the work of the National Trails Office and Leave No Trace Ireland. By involving farmers, recreational users and other relevant stakeholders, these initiatives are creating a vibrant and expanding outdoor recreation sector in Ireland, realising all of the vital benefits to society and the rural economy that this entails.

Within the context of our national forest policy, forest recreation is a vital component of sustainable forest management, as it represents a major benefit to society. The NeighbourWood Scheme is an important mechanism for fulfilling this role, as it is aimed at delivering amenity woodlands, and all of the benefits they bring, to the very heart of communities and neighbourhoods.

**Shane McEntee, T.D.**

Minister of State

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## What does the NeighbourWood Scheme support?

The NeighbourWood Scheme funds the development of attractive close-to-home woodland amenities (or 'neighbourwoods') for public use and enjoyment. The scheme is available to local councils, private landowners and others, working in partnership with local communities.

Funding is available under three separate elements:

- ❑ the silvicultural enhancement of *existing* neighbourwoods,
- ❑ the establishment of *new* neighbourwoods, and
- ❑ the installation of recreational facilities.

The NeighbourWood Scheme is operated by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan, 2007-2013.

## About this manual

This manual sets out the procedures and standards for the Forest Service NeighbourWood Scheme, and has been developed specifically for those involved in developing projects under the scheme. Additional copies are available from the Forest Service, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co Wexford (Lo-call 1890 200 223 / e-mail [forests@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forests@agriculture.gov.ie) / web [www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests)).

The NeighbourWood Scheme, originally launched in 2001, has undergone significant revision to make it more user-friendly and to broaden its application. This revision is based on the experiences gained by the Forest Service in implementing the scheme, and feedback from local councils, community groups and others involved in projects throughout the country.

The Forest Service welcomes any feedback and suggestions regarding how the NeighbourWood Scheme can be further improved. Please send any comments to Kevin Collins, Forestry Inspector, Forest Service, Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (Kevin.Collins@agriculture.gov.ie). Further amendments to this manual are likely, as the scheme develops.

## What are neighbourwoods?

Neighbourwoods are accessible, 'close-to-home' woodland amenities developed in partnership with local people and other interested groups, for public use and enjoyment.

Neighbourwoods can be used by people of all ages and abilities on a regular – often daily – basis, for strolling, family visits and picnics, walking-the-dog, 'power-walking', jogging, and a host of other outdoor activities. Also, local schools often use them as an outdoor classroom for young people to learn about nature and the environment. Typical facilities include entrances, car parking, a variety of looped footpaths,



information signage and waymarkers, nature trails, and seats and picnic tables.

A neighbourwood can be a stand-alone amenity, or can be linked into other amenities and attractions in the area, such as parkland, historic buildings, visitor attractions and wider walking routes.

Neighbourwoods vary greatly in location, size

and ownership. They can be located within or near villages, towns or cities, or may be more rural in nature. They can range in size, from pocket woodlands within built-up areas to large forests in the countryside. They may be owned by a local council or some other public body, or might even be privately owned, where the owner is prepared to allow local people to access and enjoy the woodland.

On a wider scale, neighbourwoods can be used as a 'broad brush' tool for sustainable planning and development, particularly in urban and urban fringe areas. Woodlands can be used strategically to reinforce existing greenbelts, greenways and sustainable transport corridors, to provide buffers between residential and industrial areas, to protect urban watercourses, and to reclaim former landfill sites and industrial 'brownfield' sites. Woodland can also be created in the years leading up to development, providing a ready-made green landscape for the future.

In all cases, what makes a woodland a neighbourwood is how it is perceived by local people. Neighbourwoods are an invaluable community resource and part of the local fabric of life and sense of place. They provide individuals, families and friends time-out and contact with the natural world, promote public health, well-being and a better quality of life, and create a resource for people young and old to learn about nature and the environment.



**Using the NeighbourWood Scheme to develop 'outdoor classrooms'**

Close-to-home woodlands provide local schools with an ideal 'outdoor classroom' for young people. Visits to the woodland can be incorporated into a wide range of school subjects, including environmental studies, biology, art and craftwork, history, geography and language. The Tree Council of Ireland's Tree Day and Tree Week programmes and Balrath Woodland in Co. Meath demonstrate this role of woodlands in providing a vibrant educational resource.

The NeighbourWood Scheme can be used to develop the educational function of local woodlands (both existing and new) by, for example, funding nature trails, interpretive signage and school coach parking facilities. Where adequate land is available, individual schools can also apply for funding to develop woodland as an outdoor classroom within the school grounds.

## Suitable and unsuitable projects

The NeighbourWood Scheme is aimed at projects involving the development of an attractive *woodland* setting for people to enter into and enjoy. A woodland establishment and management approach is required, involving professional forestry input and using suitable ground preparation techniques, forest transplant stock, vegetation management, etc.

Other types of projects are not eligible. These include projects involving lines, avenues or shelterbelts of trees, street or roadside trees, small isolated pockets of planting on large open green spaces, projects involving poor quality sites, and projects far removed from an obvious 'user group'. Projects dominated by intensive landscape-type planting involving standards, stakes and tree-guards are also unsuitable under the scheme (although this approach is acceptable around localised high-profile locations within an overall project, e.g. landscaping around an entrance and car-park).

Projects involving mandatory entrance fees, exclusive membership or some other barrier to general public use, are not eligible under the scheme.

The NeighbourWood Scheme funds operations directly associated with the development of new and existing woodland, and the associated recreational infrastructure. Once-off and ongoing expenses such as litter collection, the provision of security services, public liability insurance and unspecified contingency funds are not covered under the scheme.

## Who can apply?

The NeighbourWood Scheme is aimed primarily at local councils and private landowners. Other landowners may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In all cases, the landowner submits the application directly to the Forest Service.



## What are the scheme criteria?

Specific criteria apply under the scheme, as detailed below.

- ❑ There must be a clear potential for the development of an attractive amenity woodland that will be strategically located, easily accessible and well-used by local people. Relevant factors will include the suitability of location, the level of existing use, attractive features, local interest, linkage with wider walking routes and other amenities, etc.
- ❑ The project must adhere to good practice regarding amenity woodland design, establishment and management, as set out in *Forest Recreation in Ireland: A Guide for Forest Owners and Managers* (published by the Forest Service) and *Amenity Trees and Woodlands: A Guide to their Management in Ireland* (published by the Tree Council of Ireland, the Arboricultural Association – Irish Branch and the Society of Irish Foresters) and elsewhere (see Section 'Where to go for practical information and guidance').
- ❑ The project must be developed in partnership with the local community and (where relevant) with specific recreational user groups. This partnership must be clearly demonstrated at the application stage.
- ❑ The woodland must be open to the general public throughout the year<sup>1</sup>. Apart from fees for car parking and other basic services, access must be free-of-charge.
- ❑ Particular emphasis is to be placed on providing reasonable access-for-all, to enable people of different ages and abilities to use and enjoy the neighbourwood. Organisations such as Enable Ireland ([www.enableireland.ie](http://www.enableireland.ie)) and the UK's Fieldfare Trust ([www.fieldfare.org.uk](http://www.fieldfare.org.uk)) provide relevant information and guidance.
- ❑ Projects funded under the NeighbourWood Scheme are strongly encouraged to adopt and display the seven principles of Leave No Trace, the national outdoor ethics code, on information boards, booklets, websites, etc. See [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org) for details.

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<sup>1</sup> Private applicants can opt to close the site for one day in each calendar year, to avoid possible concerns regarding the establishment of access rights.

- ❑ In the case of applications on privately owned land, the applicant must provide a declaration that the amenity will be maintained and access provided for a period of at least 10 years. See Section 'Additional conditions' for further details.
- ❑ A Forest Service Registered Forester<sup>2</sup> is required to prepare the application and to oversee subsequent work. This individual will have experience of working with Forest Service grant schemes and will be aware of the relevant procedures, standards and environmental guidelines. S/he will also be familiar with woodland establishment and management operations, and will be able to identify suitable woodland contractors to undertake the work. Typically, the forester works alongside other professionals within the local council, such as landscape architects, horticulturists, planners, engineers and heritage officers.
- ❑ All applications under the NeighbourWood Scheme will be considered for approval by the Forest Service on a case-by-case basis, subject to available funds. The Forest Service will seek to achieve a regional spread of projects and a balanced uptake between different applicant types. The decision of the Forest Service on any matter relating to this scheme is final.

All applications received within the timeframe specified will be assessed against the criteria above and will also include:

1. Value for Money;
2. Capacity of applicant to complete the project within a timescale that allows for payment in 2012;
3. The maximising of the projects potential for recreational use.

The scheme document and application form are available on the Departments website. The application must be accompanied by all supporting documents **including an assessment by the applicant of the extent to which the application meets all of the above criteria and detailed in the Neighbourwood plan.**

**Other basic conditions apply, as set out elsewhere in this manual.**

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<sup>2</sup> The Forest Service Register of Foresters and Forestry Companies is available from the Forest Service, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co Wexford (Lo-call 1890 200 223 / e-mail [forestservice@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forestservice@agriculture.gov.ie)).

## What is funded under the NeighbourWood Scheme?

Funding is available under three separate elements:

- ❑ Element 1 funds the silvicultural enhancement of existing neighbourwoods;
- ❑ Element 2 funds the establishment of new neighbourwoods; and
- ❑ Element 3 funds the installation and upgrade of recreational facilities.

Each of these elements is described in the following pages.

Any combination of the above three elements can be applied for in the same NeighbourWood Scheme application. However, the area relating to each element must be clearly shown on a Grant Area Map (see Section 'What does the application involve?').

**Note that areas applied for under Element 1 and Element 2 must not physically overlap.**

## Element 1: Neighbourwood Enhancement

Element 1 funds the appropriate silvicultural enhancement of an existing woodland, to improve its sustainability, suitability and attractiveness for recreation. The maximum grant available is €4,500 / ha, paid in two separate instalments (see Section 'How are the grants paid?').

Eligible operations under Element 1 are listed below.

- Preparation of the NeighbourWood Plan
- Purchase of suitable forest transplant stock
- Ground preparation
- Fencing and other protective measures
- Clearance of invasive species such as laurel and rhododendron
- Tree felling, where appropriate
- Understorey and coupe planting
- Maintenance (including vegetation management)
- Woodland edge management
- Maintenance of open spaces
- Respacing
- Other appropriate operations, where agreed in advance with the Forest Service (e.g. ecological survey, natural regeneration works)



## Element 2: Neighbourwood Establishment

Element 2 funds the establishment of a new woodland on an open site, specifically for recreational use. The maximum grant is €5,000 / ha (plus a standard fencing allocation), paid in two separate instalments (see Section 'How are the grants paid?').

Depending on status, applicants under Element 2 may also be eligible for an Establishment Premium for up to 20 years. See Section 'Are there premiums available under the NeighbourWood Scheme?').

Eligible operations under Element 2 are listed below.

- Preparation of the NeighbourWood Plan
- Purchase of suitable forest transplant stock
- Ground preparation
- Fertiliser application
- Fencing and other protective measures
- Clearance of invasive exotic species and other woody growth, where ecologically appropriate
- Planting
- Maintenance (including vegetation management)
- Other appropriate operations, where agreed in advance with the Forest Service (e.g. ecological survey, natural regeneration works)



The project area under Element 2 can include up to 30% open space. However, this open space must be an integral part of the planned woodland amenity, e.g. open space for parking, paths, picnic areas, viewing points, etc. within the proposed woodland.

In addition to areas left open for recreational purposes, the 30% open space allowance should also include Areas for Biodiversity Enhancement (ABEs). ABEs are areas identified to protect and enhance existing habitats and biodiversity features (e.g. hedgerows, wetland, wildflower meadows, ancient trees – see the Forest Service *Forest Biodiversity Guidelines* for details). While overlap can occur between ABEs and areas left open for recreational purposes, vulnerable habitats and biodiversity features should be kept separate, in order to protect against recreational pressure.

## Element 3: Recreational Facilities

Element 3 of the NeighbourWood Scheme funds the installation and upgrade of appropriate recreational facilities within an area submitted under Element 1 or Element 2, or within an existing woodland suitable for recreation but not submitted under Element 1. The maximum grant is based on a sliding scale:

- ❑ €4,000 / ha for the first 10 hectares submitted under Element 3, and
- ❑ €2,500 / ha for each subsequent hectare submitted under Element 3, up to an overall Element 3 limit of 40 hectares.

The Element 3 grant is paid in two separate instalments (see Section 'How are the grants paid?').

Facilities can be general in nature (e.g. footpaths, signage, waymarkers, car-parking, seating, picnic tables) or specialised for a particular activity or use (e.g. fitness training equipment, playground equipment, bird-watching hides, mountain bike tracks).



All facilities must satisfy the following criteria:

- ❑ All facilities (including footpaths) must be laid out in a logical sequence, with a focus on facilitating access for all.
  - ❑ Facilities must be sensitively designed and appropriate to the woodland setting.
  - ❑ Facilities must be high quality, durable and resistant to damage.
  - ❑ Primary footpaths should be looped in nature and should have a durable walking surface (hardcore and top-dressed) of at least 1.5 m in width.
  - ❑ Facilities must be appropriately integrated throughout the entire site.
  - ❑ Overall, favour quality over quantity. Focus on positioning a carefully selected number of high quality facilities at key points within the woodland.
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- ❑ In all cases, specifications and positioning must be detailed in the NeighbourWood Scheme application. Where specialised facilities are proposed, they must adhere to established standards and specifications.
  - ❑ See the Forest Service's *Forest Recreation in Ireland: A Guide for Forest Owners and Managers* for information on facilities for woodland recreation. Projects involving recreational trail development should adhere to the trail standards

recommended by the National Trails Office<sup>3</sup>. While preparing the NeighbourWood Scheme application, it is recommended that a preliminary trail development survey be completed to assist project development groups in quantifying all necessary and appropriate works.

#### **The NeighbourWood Scheme and 'green exercise'**

Attractive close-to-home woodland amenities provide an ideal setting for people to participate in 'green exercise', i.e. regular physical exercise in a safe and relaxing natural outdoor environment. Physical exercise can simply mean stepping out regularly for a relaxing stroll, or it can entail power-walking, jogging and other forms of structured activities. At whatever level, green exercise promotes our physical health and sense of well-being, and is part of the national effort to combat obesity and heart disease and to promote public health.

Facilities eligible under Element 3 of the NeighbourWood Scheme can include specifically designed 'calorie-count' walks, fitness trails and appropriate exercise equipment, in order to promote green exercise.

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<sup>3</sup> National Trails Office, Irish Sports Council, Top Floor – Block A, West End Office Park, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 (tel. 01-8608800 / [www.irishtrails.ie](http://www.irishtrails.ie)).

## How does the NeighbourWood Scheme operate?

The following flow chart applies to all three elements of the NeighbourWood Scheme.

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<p>The applicant contacts a Registered Forester and with him/her, develops an application. This application includes a NeighbourWood Scheme Form 1, a NeighbourWood Plan, and various maps. See Section 'What does the application involve?' for further details.</p> <p>The application is then submitted to the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford.</p> <p><b>Applicants must be fully aware of the requirements (including site requirements) of the scheme, to avoid applications being developed for unsuitable projects, the cost of which will not be recoupable.</b></p> <p><b>Please note that incomplete applications may result in delays and/or applications being returned.</b></p>
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<b>APPROVAL</b>	<p>The Forest Service assesses the application, consulting with prescribed bodies, as per standard protocol. (Standard Forest Service procedures regarding consultation, appropriate assessment, EIA screening, acid sensitive areas, etc. apply.)</p> <p>If accepted, the Forest Service issues a Letter of Approval (often with conditions attached) to the applicant. A copy is also sent to the Registered Forester.</p> <p><b>Work can only commence after receipt of this letter.</b></p>
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<b>1st INSTALMENT</b>	<p>On completion of initial works, the applicant submits a NeighbourWood Scheme Form 2 together with the necessary mapping and documentation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ a statement of costs supported by invoices;</li> <li>❑ tax clearance certificates of all contractors used;</li> <li>❑ Supplier's Document / Provenance Declaration Form for all planting material used; and</li> <li>❑ ownership details.</li> </ul> <p>The site is inspected to confirm that initial works listed in the NeighbourWood Plan for completion by Form 2 submission, have been completed to the required standards. Costs are also assessed, to confirm that they are appropriate.</p> <p>The 1st Instalment of the element(s) involved is then paid. See Section 'How are the grants paid?' for details on how the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment is calculated for each element.</p>
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<b>2nd INSTALMENT</b>	<p>Four years (i.e. 48 months) after the date of completion of initial works, the 2nd Instalment becomes payable. The applicant submits a NeighbourWood Scheme Form 3.</p> <p>The site is inspected to confirm that those works listed in the NeighbourWood Plan for completion by Form 3 submission, have been completed to the required standards, and that the overall site and associated facilities have been well maintained.</p> <p>The 2nd Instalment of the element(s) involved is then paid. See Section 'How are the grants paid?' for details on how the 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment is calculated for each element.</p>
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<b>ONGOING INSPECTION</b>	<p>All sites are subject to ongoing inspection by the Forest Service, to ensure continued compliance with the NeighbourWood Plan and scheme criteria. Failure to comply may result in the recouping of grant aid.</p>
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## What does the application involve?

The initial application under the NeighbourWood Scheme includes the following components, prepared by the applicant and the Forest Service Registered Forester.

### NeighbourWood Scheme Form 1

This form<sup>4</sup> includes applicant, site location and ownership details, and environmental information required for consultation purposes. It also includes basic information summarised from the NeighbourWood Plan.

### Grant Area Map

- ❑ This map is used for area and grant calculation. An original 6 inch OS map is required, and the standard mapping conventions set out in the Forest Service document *Forestry Schemes Mapping Standards* apply.
- ❑ The areas relating to the different elements being applied for must be accurately mapped and labeled as follows:
  - Element 1: Enhancement
  - Element 2: Establishment
  - Element 3: Facilities
- ❑ Note that Element 1 and Element 2 **must not** overlap. Element 3 can include Element 1 and Element 2, or suitable woodland not submitted under Element 1.
- ❑ Element 2 can include up to 30% integrated open space. Open spaces greater than 30 m in width must be mapped on the Grant Area Map as separate plots.

### NeighbourWood Plan

The NeighbourWood Plan details the project, its short-term objectives, and the specific operations proposed under each element being applied for. The plan must adhere strictly to the template provided in Appendix A.

### Site Location Map

A site location map is required, based on a Discovery Series 1:50,000 map and showing the main access approach onto the site.

### NOTES

- ❑ **Please note that incomplete applications (including incomplete NeighbourWood Plans and maps) may result in delays and/or applications being returned.**
- ❑ The Form 1 and NeighbourWood Plan must both be signed by the same Forest Service Registered Forester. This individual must also be directly involved in overseeing the subsequent work, and is also required to sign the Form 2.
- ❑ The applicant should develop a fire plan, as set out in the *Forestry Schemes Manual* and the *Forest Protection Guidelines*.

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<sup>4</sup> Copies available from the Forest Service, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co Wexford (Lo-call 1890 200 223 / e-mail [forestservice@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forestservice@agriculture.gov.ie)).



## How are the grants paid?

### Element 1: Neighbourwood Enhancement

The maximum grant payable under Element 1: Enhancement is €4,500 / ha, based on approved direct costs and paid in two instalments. Approved eligible operations are set out in Section 'Element 1: NeighbourWood Enhancement'.

All costs, including management costs and anticipated costs for the next 4 years (48 months), should be included in the claim for the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment grant (i.e. Form 2). 75% of these costs **or** 75% of the maximum grant (whichever is less) is payable as the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment. 25% of these costs **or** 25% of the maximum grant (whichever is less) is payable as the 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment.

If the applicant is registered for VAT, the grant is exclusive of VAT (and vice versa).

### Element 2: Neighbourwood Establishment

The total grant available under Element 2: Woodland Establishment is €5,000 / ha (plus a standard fencing allocation as outlined in the table below). This is paid in two instalments, as set out below. (This corresponds to GPC6 under the general Forest Service Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme, but applies to all species acceptable under the NeighbourWood Scheme.)

1st Instalment € / ha	2nd Instalment € / ha	Total grant € / ha	Fencing Allocation 100 m/ha cap	
			IS436 € / ha	Non IS436 € / ha
3,800 *	1,200	5,000 *	500	450

(\* An additional allocation is allowed for fencing erected and is subject to the same requirements and specifications as outlined in Forest Service Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme conditions.

Approved eligible operations are set out in Section 'Element 2: NeighbourWood Establishment'.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment becomes payable 4 years (i.e. 48 months) after the date of completion of initial work, subject to satisfactory maintenance.

If the applicant is registered for VAT, the grant is exclusive of VAT (and vice versa).

### Element 3: Recreational Facilities

The maximum grant payable under Element 3 is based on the following sliding scale:

- €4,000 / ha for the first 10 hectares submitted under Element 3, and
- €2,500 / ha for each subsequent hectare submitted under Element 3, up to an overall Element 3 limit of 40 hectares.

The Element 3 grant is paid in two instalments, as set out below.

<b>Area</b>	<b>1st Instalment € / ha</b>	<b>2nd Instalment € / ha</b>	<b>Total grant € / ha</b>
First 10 hectares under Element 3	2,500	1,500	4,000
Subsequent hectares under Element 3, up to overall Element 3 limit of 40 ha	1,750	750	2,500

The 1<sup>st</sup> instalment grant is cost-based up to the maximum grant level shown above. Approved eligible operations are set out in Section 'Element 3: Facilities'.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment is fixed, and becomes payable 4 years (i.e. 48 months) after the date of completion of initial work, subject to satisfactory maintenance.

If the applicant is registered for VAT, the grant is exclusive of VAT (and vice versa).

### Are there premiums available under the NeighbourWood Scheme?

Depending on status (farmer, non-farmer), certain applicants under Element 2: Establishment may be eligible for an annual premium for up to 20 years, commencing with the 1st grant instalment. Premium levels and relevant terms and conditions are set out in the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme.

## Tackling larger projects

In the case of larger projects, applicants are encouraged to divide the project into smaller 'do-able' phases, based on what can be realistically achieved in, for example, one year. This allows the project to develop gradually through a rolling programme of work spread over several years, based on local capacities. This allows the gradual development of the resource itself, and also the working relationship, confidence and trust between all of the different partners involved.

In the case of larger projects, applicants should consider one of two options:

- ❑ the overall project area can be subdivided into smaller areas, with each area applied for separately under the NeighbourWood Scheme in successive years; or
- ❑ each element can be applied for separately in successive years.



## Site requirements

- ❑ The site must be capable of supporting the vigorous and sustainable establishment and development of the proposed woodland. High elevation sites, severely exposed sites and infertile sites are excluded, as are sites with rock outcrops over 25% of the area and sites with a shell marl within 50 cm of the soil surface.
- ❑ Potentially problematic urban sites such as former landfills, brownfield sites and other altered sites must be fully evaluated by the applicant regarding their suitability for woodland development. Issues include substrate quality and fertility, topsoil depth, capping treatment and possible contaminants. Relevant sources of information include *Tree Establishment on Landfill Sites (1997)*<sup>5</sup>.
- ❑ The minimum site area under each element is 0.1 ha. The minimum average width ('tree-to-tree', excluding open spaces, buffer zones, etc.) is 20 m.
- ❑ Standard Forest Service procedures regarding consultation, appropriate assessment, EIA screening, acid sensitive areas, etc. apply.
- ❑ See Section 'Suitable and unsuitable projects' for project types unsuitable under the NeighbourWood Scheme.

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<sup>5</sup> Available from Forestry Commission Publications, PO Box 25, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EW, England.

## Species requirements

The following species are acceptable for planting under Element 1 and Element 2 of the NeighbourWood Scheme (other species may also be acceptable to the Forest Service, on a case-by-case basis).

<b>Broadleaves</b>	<b>Conifers</b>
Common alder ( <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> ) *	Western red cedar ( <i>Thuja plicata</i> )
Ash ( <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ) *	Douglas fir ( <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> )
Beech ( <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> )	Grand fir ( <i>Abies grandis</i> )
Downy birch ( <i>Betula pubescens</i> ) *	Western hemlock ( <i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> )
Silver birch ( <i>Betula pendula</i> ) *	European larch ( <i>Larix decidua</i> )
Wild cherry ( <i>Prunus avium</i> ) *	Hybrid larch ( <i>Larix x eurolepis</i> )
Spanish chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> )	Japanese larch ( <i>Larix kaempferi</i> )
Lime ( <i>Tilia cordata</i> )	Austrian pine ( <i>Pinus nigra</i> var. <i>nigra</i> )
Norway maple ( <i>Acer platanoides</i> )	Corsican pine ( <i>Pinus nigra</i> var. <i>maritima</i> )
Pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> ) *	Lodgepole pine ( <i>Pinus contorta</i> )
Sessile oak ( <i>Quercus petraea</i> ) *	Monterey pine ( <i>Pinus radiata</i> )
Rowan ( <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> ) *	Scots pine ( <i>Pinus sylvestris</i> ) *
Sycamore ( <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> )	Coast redwood ( <i>Sequoia sempervirens</i> )
Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> ) *	Norway spruce ( <i>Picea abies</i> )
Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> ) *	Sitka spruce ( <i>Picea sitchensis</i> )

### Additional requirements

- ❑ Under EU legislation, all forest reproductive material must be covered by a Supplier's Document in the format of a Provenance Declaration Form. In addition, a number of species require an EU Plant Passport under Plant Health Regulations. Refer to the *Forestry Schemes Manual* for full details, specifications and procedures regarding acceptable seed origins / provenances and plant health requirements.
- ❑ To promote the wildlife value of the neighbourwood, applicants are strongly encouraged to favour native trees (indicated by '\*' in the above table) derived from seed collected from within the island of Ireland.
- ❑ Species selection must reflect the site and sub-site conditions, e.g. 'pioneer' species such as rowan and silver birch on difficult sites, alder in damper areas, oak and beech on drier, more fertile sites, etc.



- ❑ All planting under Element 1 and Element 2 is to be carried out using forest transplant stock planted at 2.0 x 2.0 m spacing, giving 2,500 trees / ha.
- ❑ Planting mixtures must comprise species with compatible growth rates.

## Ground preparation

Species selection should reflect the natural conditions of the site, to minimise the need for altering site conditions. For public safety, ground preparation methods should be limited to ripping and scrap mounding, and drainage generally avoided.

## Protection

Where necessary, sites must be protected from deer, goats, livestock, rabbits and hares, to prevent damage to newly planted trees. All protective measures must adhere to the standards and specifications set out in the *Forestry Schemes Manual* and *Forest Protection Guidelines*.

Tree guards can be used, where appropriate, e.g. small sites, low-density planting within aquatic buffer zones, understorey or coupe planting.

In heavily used areas such as public parks, it may be appropriate to use simple post-and-rail fencing to demarcate areas newly planted under the scheme, to remind people of the presence of the young vulnerable trees.

## Vegetation management

For health & safety and environmental reasons, all herbicide use must adhere to the *Guidelines for the Use of Herbicides in Forestry*, *Forestry & Water Quality Guidelines* and *Forest Protection Guidelines*.

## Establishment

The control of grass, herbaceous plants, bramble, bracken, etc. is essential for the rapid establishment and growth of young trees planted under both Element 1 and Element 2 of the NeighbourWood Scheme. Poor vegetation management results in mortality, the loss of growth and vigour, and the need for greater input later on (e.g. the filling-in of gaps).

Non-herbicide control (trampling, mulches, mats) is generally only realistic on smaller sites and in highly sensitive areas (e.g. aquatic buffer zones). Otherwise, herbicide application represents the most effective and economical method of vegetation management.

Where used, herbicide application must be kept to the minimum required to ensure success, and should be used in combination with other methods, e.g. scrap mounding (to provide a vegetation-free planting position) and the use of larger transplant stock. Herbicide application should be carried out using a knapsack sprayer, with the aim of maintaining a control area around the base of each tree.

Mechanical cutting, mowing and the use of strimmers are not appropriate, as these methods can invigorate competition and result in physical damage to the young trees.

### **Invasive species**



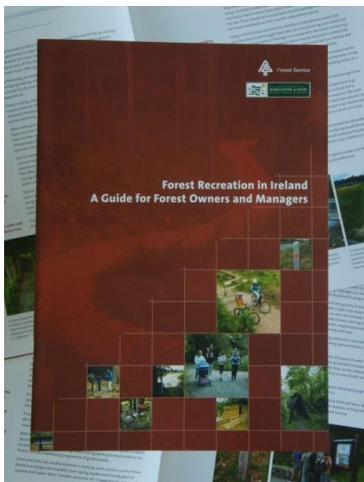
A number of invasive species can represent a serious threat to the amenity value and development of woodland. These including rhododendron, laurel (photo), red osier dogwood, Japanese knotweed and snowberry. Such species must be effectively controlled and removed, through the application of best practice appropriate to the site (cutting and stump treatment, stem injection, foliar spray, mechanical felling or uprooting, etc.). A long-term strategic approach is invariably required, based on initial treatment, follow-up treatment, control (where possible) on adjoining sites, and ongoing monitoring.

Rhododendron represents a significant threat, and treatment includes stump treatment and the spraying of regrowth, stem injection, and mechanical uprooting and removal. The Native Woodland Scheme Information Note No. 3, entitled *The Control of Rhododendron in Native Woodlands*, sets out current best practice. Contact Woodlands of Ireland (e-mail [woodsofireland@iol.ie](mailto:woodsofireland@iol.ie)) for details.

In all cases, any cut woody material should be piled neatly onsite or removed, to allow clear access for planting and the treatment of regrowth.

## Where to go for practical information and guidance

The following publications provide practical information and guidance on amenity woodland and public participation.



### **Forest Recreation in Ireland: A Guide for Forest Owners and Managers**

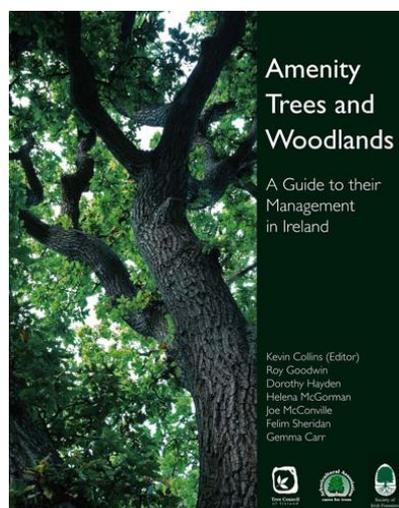
Information on general forest recreation, including consultation and planning, advice on facilities such as footpaths, signage and open spaces, and recreational issues such as promotion, woodland education, safety and security, and dealing with vandalism and other undesirable activities. Also contains a listing of relevant publications and organisations. Contact the Forest Service for copies.

### **Interacting with Greenspace: Public Participating with Professionals in the Planning and Management of Parks and Woodlands**

A practical manual setting out ways to involve local people in the ongoing planning and management of neighbourwoods. Contact the Forest Service for further information.

### **Amenity Trees and Woodlands: A Guide to their Management in Ireland**

Information on the establishment and management of amenity woodlands, including species selection, planting and aftercare, thinning, invasive species and woodland rejuvenation. Contact the Tree Council of Ireland (Tel. 01-493 1313 / e-mail [trees@treecouncil.ie](mailto:trees@treecouncil.ie)) for further information.



## Additional conditions

The following are additional conditions under the NeighbourWood Scheme.

- ❑ All woodland and woodland activities are subject to the provisions of the Forestry Act 1946. This includes the need for a Felling Licence for proposed tree felling / uprooting. Where relevant, applications for a Felling Licence should be made prior to or in tandem with the NeighbourWood application, to avoid delays after grant approval.
- ❑ All works must adhere to the Forest Service *Code of Best Forest Practice - Ireland, Forestry Schemes Manual* and environmental guidelines, the specific conditions of the NeighbourWood Scheme, and to any additional conditions attached to the Letter of Approval.
- ❑ The Forest Service may request the applicant to supply letters of support for the project from third parties, such as local councils, tourism development bodies and national sporting bodies.
- ❑ Support under the NeighbourWood Scheme must be acknowledged on all information boards, leaflets, booklets, posters, websites, press releases, press articles, etc. relating to the project, using the following wording:

*This project is supported by the NeighbourWood Scheme, funded by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, under the National Development Plan, 2007-2013.*
- ❑ The above wording must also be accompanied in the following order by the Forest Service logo, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine logo, and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 logo (electronic versions available from the Forest Service).
- ❑ Support under the NeighbourWood Scheme must also be highlighted during all interviews for printed media, radio and TV.
- ❑ In the case of privately owned sites, the applicant must provide a declaration that the amenity will be maintained and access provided for a period of at least 10 years from receipt of the first grant instalment under the scheme, failing which, all monies paid under the scheme will be recovered by the Forest Service.
- ❑ The Minister must be informed if there is a change of ownership of a woodland which has received grant assistance under the scheme. In the event of a change of ownership, or other disposal, the Minister reserves the right to redeem the grant or to seek adequate written assurance from the prospective purchaser or other appropriate party regarding the future maintenance of the amenity and its facilities, and its future availability for public use. In the event of failing to obtain such assurance, the Minister reserves the right to redeem from the grantee the full amount of the grant and/or any premiums paid in respect of the project.
- ❑ The owner is responsible for all issues surrounding safety and public liability in relation to projects receiving funding under the NeighbourWood Scheme<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Relevant and useful codes of practice and guidelines relating to this area include the following:

- ❑ *Code of Practice for Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations*. 2003. Health and Safety Authority, 10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2 ([www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)).
- ❑ *Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside: Principles and Practice*. 2003. Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group ([www.vscg.co.uk](http://www.vscg.co.uk)).

Applicants should ensure that their woodland has adequate public liability insurance. No liability shall be attached to the Minister for any injury, loss or damage to any person in respect of the woodland.

- The Forest Service penalty and appeals system applies to the NeighbourWood Scheme.

## Appendix A

# NeighbourWood Plan Template

### Important notes

- ❑ As set out in the Section 'What does the application involve?', applications under the NeighbourWood Scheme include a NeighbourWood Scheme Form 1, a NeighbourWood Plan, and various maps. The application is submitted to the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford.
- ❑ The NeighbourWood Plan must fully adhere to the template below, addressing each part in turn. An electronic version of this template is available for download at [www.agriculture.gov.ie/forestservice](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forestservice)
- ❑ The NeighbourWood Plan must be developed by the applicant and a Forest Service Registered Forester.
- ❑ At various points, NeighbourWood Plan Maps are required to illustrate particular information within the NeighbourWood Plan. These maps, contained within the plan itself, must adhere to the following conventions:
  - Maps can be GIS-generated or based on enlarged 6 inch OS maps, and appropriately scaled for clarity.
  - Maps must be appropriately titled and cross-referenced with the plan.
  - Each map should accurately represent the information being illustrated, and be legible.
  - In all maps, the perimeter of the overall site should be outlined in red. Features and attributes must be clearly indicated using symbols, colours, letters, text-and-arrows, etc. and a concise legend. Linear features (e.g. existing footpaths, streams, hedgerows) should be indicated using colour-coding, and individual features (e.g. view points, existing seating) by letters or symbols.
  - Applicants should be aware of the value of aerial photographs for mapping, particularly in locating existing site features, habitats, boundaries and reference points.
- ❑ The NeighbourWood Plan can be accompanied by additional material such as site photos, aerial photos, supporting literature, letters of support and local newspaper articles.
- ❑ The NeighbourWood Plan must be submitted in a photocopy-friendly A4 format, avoiding permanent binding.
- ❑ Please note that incomplete NeighbourWood Plans and accompanying maps, or incoherence and discrepancies, may result in delays and/or applications being returned to the applicant.

## NeighbourWood Plan

Contract number  
(for office use only)

### Contact details

Project site and location, as detailed on the NeighbourWood Scheme Form 1

NeighbourWood Scheme element(s) being applied for (tick as relevant)

Element 1: Woodland Enhancement

Element 2: Woodland Establishment

Element 3: Recreational Facilities

#### Applicant

Organisation (if relevant)

Contact name

Address

Telephone

Fax.

E-mail

#### Registered Forester

Contact name

Address

Telephone

Fax.

E-mail

### Project overview

1. Give an overview of the proposed project, including overall aims, linkages with other projects / initiatives / amenities, incorporation into local plans, etc.

2. List the specific partners involved in the project (e.g. local council, local resident groups, environmental NGOs, local schools, sporting bodies). Describe the role of each, both to date and in the future. Provide contact details for each.

3. Who will be the likely users of the woodland? Describe the likely level of use.

4. Describe measures undertaken to involve local people (e.g. existing site users, adjoining residents, local families, local schools) in the development of the project to date.
5. Describe measures to involve local people in the future as the project develops.
6. Who will be responsible for the long-term maintenance and development of the project, and what measures are being put in place to underpin this?

## Site details

1. Describe the location of the overall site, particularly in relation to nearby centres of population.
2. What is the area, in hectares, of the overall site?
3. What is the ownership status? (Please note, if privately owned, the applicant must provide a declaration that the amenity will be maintained and access provided for a period of at least 10 years from receipt of the first grant instalment under the scheme.)
4. What is the overall site currently being used for?
5. Give a general overview of the existing features on the overall site, locating these on a NeighbourWood Plan Map. Examples include:
  - existing walking routes (forest roads, footpaths, unofficial tracks)
  - other existing recreational facilities (car parking, picnic sites, seating, etc.)
  - existing woodland cover, hedgerows, ancient trees, wet hollows and other habitats and small features of biodiversity value
  - archaeological features, earthworks, old stonewalls, etc. (Note that full adherence to the Forest Service *Forestry & Archaeological Guidelines* and to any special conditions attached to the Letter of Approval, is required in relation to archaeological features on and adjoining the site.)
  - other historical or cultural features
  - prominent viewpoints
6. Describe threats that, unless addressed, may have a negative impact on project development (e.g. vandalism, horse trespass, invasive species, overmature canopy, litter). Where relevant, map the extent on the threat on a NeighbourWood Plan Map. Note that these factors will have to be addressed in subsequent sections of the plan.

## Project objectives

### Medium to long-term vision

What is the medium to long-term vision for the site over the next 20 years?

### Short-term objectives

What are the short-term objectives to be achieved with NeighbourWood Scheme funding. Note that grant payment will depend on these objectives being met.

Specific details are required, for example,

- ❑ "To clear laurel from 3.0 ha concentrated in the northwest of the site."
- ❑ "To develop 1,300 m of waymarked looped walking trails, together with a welcoming sign at two entrance points and seating at six vantage points on the site."
- ❑ "To establish 4.0 ha of new woodland, comprising oak, ash, rowan and silver birch."

## Element 1: NeighbourWood Enhancement

How much of the overall site, in hectares, is being submitted under Element 1: Enhancement? Note that this area must correspond with the area illustrated on the Grant Area Map.

### Form 2 operations

Describe and cost proposed operations to be completed before Form 2 (i.e. application for 1<sup>st</sup> grant instalment) submission. *Note that specific details are required, e.g. areas, species for removal, species to be planted, planting ratios, protective measures, application rates.*

Where practical, illustrate relevant operations on a NeighbourWood Plan Map, e.g. areas to be cleared of rhododendron, the position and extent of planting coupes, the position of protective fencing.

On the same map, illustrate open space within the Element 1 area.

### Form 3 operations

Using a yearly schedule, describe and cost the operations to be completed after Form 2 submission and before Form 3 (i.e. application for 2<sup>nd</sup> grant instalment) submission.

### Medium to long-term operations

In general terms, describe management operations envisaged up to year 40.

## Element 2: Neighbourwood Establishment

How much of the overall site, in hectares, is being submitted under Element 2: Establishment? Note that this area must correspond with the area illustrated on the Grant Area Map.

### Form 2 operations

Describe and cost proposed operations to be completed before Form 2 (i.e. application for 1<sup>st</sup> grant instalment) submission. Note that specific details are required, e.g. species to be planted, planting ratios, protective measures, application rates.

Using a NeighbourWood Plan Map, illustrate within the Element 2 area the exact 'footprint' of the proposed planting and the proposed open spaces. (Up to 30% of the area is allowed as integrated open space.) Also illustrate the position of protective fencing (if used) and other relevant operations.

### Form 3 operations

Using a yearly schedule, describe and cost the operations to be completed after Form 2 submission and before Form 3 (i.e. application for 2<sup>nd</sup> grant instalment) submission.

### Medium to long-term operations

In general terms, describe management operations envisaged up to year 40.

## Element 3: Recreational Facilities

How much of the site, in hectares, is being submitted for funding under Element 3: Recreational Facilities? Note that this area must correspond with the area illustrated on the Grant Area Map.

### Form 2 operations

Describe and cost the type of facilities to be installed / upgraded before Form 2 (i.e. application for 1<sup>st</sup> grant instalment) submission. Include clear specification for each type (including diagrams, plans and photos), the number of units and the unit cost (including materials and installation).

Illustrate the proposed position of each facility (e.g. footpaths, seats, picnic tables, signs, car parking) on a NeighbourWood Plan Map.

### Form 3 operations

Using a yearly schedule, describe and cost the operations relating to these facilities to be completed after Form 2 submission and before Form 3 (i.e. application for 2<sup>nd</sup> grant instalment) submission.

## Declaration

We, the undersigned, declare that we have jointly prepared this NeighbourWood Plan as part of the application for this site under the NeighbourWood Scheme, in accordance with the terms and condition of the scheme.

### Applicant

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Registered Forester

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_