

Riparian Tree Planting

Funding is offered for planting trees in riparian areas (i.e. next to watercourses) to intercept surface run-off, stabilise banksides and reduce the risk of pollutants such as sediment and nutrients reaching nearby watercourses. Riparian tree planting can also improve infiltration, act as a barrier to pesticide spray drift, provide shade to aquatic life and increase biodiversity through creation of a riparian corridor.

Length of agreement available

Agreements lasting for a minimum of ten years from establishment are available, although tree-planting should be considered a permanent land use change as it is likely that the trees will have legal protection after a few years.

Where to use this measure

- On land that is currently in agricultural production (i.e., in arable or grazing/cutting grass) and adjacent to streams and rivers which will intercept surface runoff.
- Only in areas approved for riparian tree planting by a Wessex Water catchment advisor and identified in the woodland creation plan for the site (which will be created by a FWAG woodland advisor).

Where to this measure cannot be used

- Tree planting that has been/will be funded by another scheme (such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Biodiversity Net Gain or nutrient neutrality)
- In situations where the management of the field is in breach of the Farming Rules for Water or Nitrate Vulnerable Zone rules (if applicable). Successful applicants are required to sign the compliance declaration described in the record keeping section below
- In areas of existing woodland or land that has been woodland in the last 5 years
- Not in conjunction with pheasant/game bird pens
- On a site where woodland planting has been previously supported by a grant

Requirements

- Establish woodland plots according to the tree planting plan provided as part of the agreement and ensure a healthy tree canopy is maintained.
- Ensure relevant consents and permission have been obtained e.g., planning, wildlife, flood risk etc.

- Planting:
 - Plant according to bespoke planting plan created by FWAG SW as agreed by Wessex Water catchment advisor
 - Carry out work between 1 November and 31 March
 - Prepare the ground to provide good soil conditions and as little competition from other vegetation as possible
 - Apply any herbicide to the individual planting sites in the August or September prior to planting only
 - Plants must be kept clear of weeds for a minimum of three years after planting
 - Prevent livestock and grazing animals from damaging the woodland by setting fencing at least 1.2m from the outermost trees (full or part-funding for fencing maybe be available as part of the Wessex Water Phosphorus Reduction Scheme)
- Maintenance:
 - Ensure trees have adequate supply of water to encourage survival particularly in the drier seasons in early years after establishment.
 - Replace failures and close any gaps in the following planting season to maintain the minimum planting density throughout the first ten years of the agreement.
 - Protect newly planted trees from weeds for three years. Cut or spot-spray any undesirable plants, such as nettles, bracken, injurious weeds, or invasive non-native species as soon as possible to avoid them becoming established
 - Consider coppicing or pollarding trees if suitable as this will encourage bushy growth and increase the ability to slow run-off
 - Remove individual guards and tree shelters once the plants are established, usually from 5 years onwards.
 - Maintain a dense and tussocky grass understory to support the function of the buffer.
 - If possible, water plants during dry summers especially in the first few years after establishment.

Restrictions

Riparian tree planting which is funded by any other scheme (such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Biodiversity Net Gain or nutrient neutrality) is **not** eligible.

- **Do not** apply any organic manures or inorganic fertilisers
- **Do not** use pesticides, except for herbicides to spot-treat or weed-wipe to control nettles, bracken, injurious weeds, or invasive non-native species if not using mulch mats
- **Do not** allow pesticides and fertiliser to drift into the wooded area
- **Do not** plough, cultivate or re-seed between trees
- **Do not** attach fencing wire to trees or hedgerows
- **Do not** block or restrict access to open access land
- **Do not** allow livestock access to the woodland or use for the purpose of rearing game birds.

- **Do not** cut down or remove any trees without a felling license, and without following the terms of the agreement regarding felling and restocking
- **Do not** cultivate within 3m of the base of any trees

Consents and permits

- Woodland planting projects over 0.5ha in England require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Afforestation administered by the Forestry Commission. An application can be submitted to the Forestry Commission.
- The Environment Agency should be consulted on all tree planting along designated 'main river' locations as consent may be needed in these circumstances. If your land lies on the floodplain you will also need to talk to the local Internal Drainage Board before creating any new woodland.
- Tree planting should not be located on areas of archaeological or historic importance. You should obtain relevant consents before carrying out work in areas close to these features.
- Visual intrusion and impacts on landscape character should also be considered in the construction and alignment of a new hedge line, particularly in designated landscapes or historic parkland.
- In wetland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and other priority habitat areas such as county wildlife sites, the grazing of ditch banks and riparian grazing marsh is often essential to maintain the ecological interest of the site. Natural England will not issue a consent for tree planting on a designated site (SSSI etc) where this is considered detrimental to the conservation objectives.
- Inform the Rural Payments Agency if tree planting splits one existing field parcel into separate fields.

Record keeping and payment terms

Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them with *the payment claim*. Payment will only be made upon satisfactory receipt of all of the following records:

- Photographs before, during and on completion of planting
- Soil analysis results (pH, P and K as a minimum) for the relevant fields dated within the past 3 years.
- Farm and field information needed to run a phosphorus loss tool for the farm and calculate the reduction in phosphorus loss to water arising from this work. This will include farm data relating to livestock numbers, cropping areas and fertiliser / manure inputs.
- Self-declaration that the terms of the project agreement have been adhered to
- Successful applicants are required to sign a declaration confirming that:
 - reasonable precautions are taken to prevent nutrients and soil from the relevant field entering watercourses or from being leached to groundwater - to an extent that could cause pollution.
 - the relevant fields have not been (i) the source of a recorded pollution incident which could have been prevented by the farmer taking reasonable precautions to prevent that pollution and/or (ii) the subject of a warning, fine, prosecution or

BPS deduction issued to the farmer by the Environment Agency or RPA for a breach of NVZ rules or Farming Rules for Water in the past 5 years.

- It is expected that to support and inform the above declaration, successful applicants will complete the Environment Agency's Agricultural Compliance Tool annually and submit it when completed to Wessex Water (who will hold it in confidence) and address any actions identified by the ACT. For agreements involving annual payments of more than 5 years duration and/or with a value in excess of £5,000 of annual payments, successful applicants are required to complete the ACT annually (when publicly available), submit it to Wessex Water and address any actions identified by the ACT.
- Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them *on request*.
 - Field operations at the field parcel level, including associated invoices

Additional information

Woodland planting guide

<https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a1435b75-1669-468a-891f-86a6b4d14c7d>