



Focus on Forestry First

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Scheme rules

2022



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CONTENTS

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Section A - Introduction

This guidance is for those working in the trees and timber sector in Wales, who intend to apply for support from the Skills Development scheme. Part of Forestry Focused Future. The details contained within this booklet are not exhaustive and may be updated.

The purpose of Forestry Focused Future (FFF) is to:

- Increasing the productivity, diversity and efficiency of the trees and timber sector, improving their competitiveness and resilience, reducing their reliance on subsidies;
- Improving the environment, encouraging sustainable land management practices, the sustainable management of our natural resources and climate action;
- Promoting strong, sustainable rural economic growth and encourage community-led action development.

Skills Development (SD) – aims to raise the skills and competence of the trees and timber sector. Focus on Forestry First Ltd (FFF Ltd) will work with businesses to identify their current and future training needs that support the delivery of Government Policy. This will be set out in a Training Agreement. We will allocate funding for training on a business by business basis, for those training events that are supported by this scheme.

- Trees and Timber businesses will be expected to fund 25% of the cost of training.
- The payment of the 25% by the beneficiary and the payment of the training provider costs will be done through FFF Ltd so for audit purposes FFF Ltd is in full control of the funding and there is compliance with the data protection regulations.
- FFF Ltd is experienced in the management and monitoring of training delivered with the support of grant schemes.
- FFF Ltd will work with Training Providers in Wales to deliver the training events.
- FFF Ltd will maintain continuous evaluation of the delivery and performance of the beneficiaries to ensure that any changes that are needed to maintain optimum delivery are implemented in a timely manner.

Overall programme aim is to maximise productivity, efficiency and profitability through developing industry competent staff.

This scheme also supports the commitment of woodland set out in the Welsh Government's woodland strategy, Woodland for Wales.

Forestry Focused Future is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and the European Commission as part of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014-2020.

Forestry Focused Future is governed by the Rural Development Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2014 SI No. 3222 (W. 327) which applies to the Rural Development Programmes, Council Regulations (EU) No. 1305/2013, 1303/2013 and (EU) No. 1306/2013, Commission Regulation (EU) No. 808/2014 and (EU) No. 809/2014 and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 640/2014 and 807/2014 (all as amended from time to time). Copies of the regulations are available online via www.gov.wales or hard copies can be requested from the Rural Payments Wales Customer Contact Centre.

Focus on Forestry First Ltd (FFF Ltd)

This is the not for profit company that delivers the Forestry Focused Future Scheme on behalf of Welsh Government.

State Aid

- Grants provided under this scheme are aid which fall within the scope of the State Aid frameworks because Articles 107, 108 and 109 Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) apply to support given for rural development under the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014-2020 (ref: SA 43466).
- From 01 July 2016 the State Aid Transparency requirements set out in article 9 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 of 25 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union require any individual awards of aid above a 500,000euro threshold (for Agriculture) to be reported directly to the European Commission on a 6 monthly basis. The information will be published via the Welsh Government and European Commission Transparency Website.
- Grant provided under the following options in this scheme is compliant aid because it respects the conditions set out in Article 32, 33 and 35 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 (Agriculture Block Exemption Regulation).

Section B – Eligibility

To be eligible for the Skills Development grant you or your business must:

- have a residential or business address within Wales.
- be a public or private business including self-employed, municipality or an association working in the trees and timber sector.

Section C – Skills Development Scheme

What is Supported?

Skills Development provides grant aid towards the cost of a wide range of training events. These must be included in your Training Agreement before you are eligible for support (see below.)

The training events that we will support can be found on the website at:
<https://www.focusonforestryfirst.co.uk/skills-development-supported-qualifications>

Level of support

The current level of support is 75% of the cost of the event. This is only secured and confirmed once you have secured a place on the course, we have been notified by your approved training provider, and paid your 25% contribution.

The maximum value of training supported by Skills Development is set at approximately £1200.00 per Beneficiary. This will be calculated by using average costs per course as the training agreement is developed. Once a course takes the total value over £1200.00 then no further courses will be included in the Training Agreement.

Beneficiaries can only be included in one Training Agreement.

Information we require to enter the Skills Development Scheme

You must be registered with FFF Ltd to become a beneficiary of the project. To do this you complete the online form found on our website www.focusonforestryfirst.co.uk

FFF Ltd will then check your eligibility and confirm by sending you an invoice for the relevant Registration Fee. Currently this is £75+VAT for a self-employed person / £125+VAT for a Business with Employees / Woodland Owner or Community Woodland Group. (The registration fee may be subject to change.)

Once you have paid your Registration Fee, FFF Ltd will send you an online Skills Evaluation Form to be completed. This gives us details of your business and your employees (if you have any) so we can understand why you require support for specific training events.

FFF Ltd will evaluate your training needs based on this information. We may have some queries which will be emailed to you within 7 - 10 working days of receiving your forms. Once we have collated the information, FFF Ltd will supply you with your draft Training Agreement. This needs to be carefully checked, you will have 10 working days to get back to us with changes before we confirm this as active

Section D – How to Apply

Registration for Support. You must be registered with FFF Ltd to become a beneficiary of the project. To do this you complete the online form found on our website www.focusonforestryfirst.co.uk

FFF Ltd will check eligibility and confirm registration by sending an invoice for the relevant Registration Fee (£75+VAT for a self-employed person / £125+VAT for a Business with Employees / Woodland Owner or Community Woodland Group).

Undertake Skills Evaluation. Once the Registration Fee has been paid, FFF Ltd will send the beneficiary an online Skills Evaluation Form to be completed.

Develop a Training Agreement. FFF Ltd will evaluate the beneficiaries training needs based on the information submitted. We may have some queries which will be emailed to the beneficiary within 7 - 10 working days of receiving the forms.

The maximum value of training supported by Skills Development is set at approximately £1200.00 per Beneficiary. Beneficiaries can only be included in one training agreement. FFF Ltd will use average costs per course to assess the value of the Training Agreement. Once a course takes the total value over £1200.00 then no further courses will be included in the Training Agreement.

Once we have collated the information, FFF Ltd will supply the beneficiary with a draft Training Agreement. This needs to be carefully checked, the beneficiary has 10 working days to get back to us with changes before we confirm this is active. There is no guarantee of funding for the events listed in your training agreement. Funding is only secured when we accept a valid notification i.e., you are booked onto a course.

Booking Courses. Once the beneficiary has their Training Agreement, they will be able to contact their preferred training provider to book their course(s). The beneficiary has to do this, FFF Ltd. will not arrange your training. You will only get funding from FFF Ltd for courses detailed on your training agreement. We will not fund any other courses.

FFF Ltd has a list of agreed training providers available who will know what to do next. These can be found on the FFF Ltd website. They will notify us of your planned training. We will not accept bookings for courses more than 3 months in advance of the date of notification. We need to be notified of your attendance on the course at least 28 days in advance of the course.

You should expect an invoice for your contribution fee of 25% of the total cost of the course within 5 working days. This must be paid immediately to secure your funding. If you do not pay before this invoice before the start of the training course, then we will not provide the grant and you will have to pay the full cost.

If you do not attend the event, then you will be liable to pay cancellation charges directly to the Training Provider.

After the Training Event. The training provider must send the claim invoice and the supporting evidence to FFF Ltd within 6 weeks of the course end date. The supporting evidence must include the attendance register, certificate of competence or training, and feedback where an assessment results in a failure. Invoices without all the required evidence will be returned until all evidence is submitted.

All invoices must contain PO number, Business ID & Name, Trainee ID & Name, and the Course Title. Invoices received without this information will be returned for correction and not paid.

Legislation Changes (Including Changes in Interpretation)

European Regulations may change from time to time and you will be required to abide by any changes imposed following notification from the Welsh Government.

Changes to Scheme Rules

We may need to make changes to your contract including payment rates. For example, we may need to scheme rules to take account of any changes within the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 or revise payment rates. We will publicise changes in Gwlad, on the Welsh Government website (www.gov.wales) and will notify you were necessary.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints will be dealt with under the Focus on Forestry First Ltd Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure. For a copy or for further advice on how to make a complaint please contact Focus on Forestry First Ltd, details in Section F.

In addition, you may also choose to contact: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales,

1 Ffordd y Hen Gae,
Pencoed,
CF35 5LJ
Website: www.ico.org.uk

Section E – General Data Protection Regulation: Privacy Notice

This notice informs you about Focus on Forestry First Ltd use of the information used in connection with your application for aid under the Welsh Government's Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme for Wales 2014 – 2020 schemes. It also explains the Welsh Government's processing and use of your personal data and your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation.

The data controller for the information submitted as part of your application is Focus on Forestry First Ltd, C/O Coed Pwllacca, Brynwern, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SE

The data protection officer for the same information is the Data Protection Officer, Focus on Forestry First Ltd, C/O Coed Pwllacca, Brynwern, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SE

Email: info@focusonforestryfirst.co.uk

The information will be processed and managed by Focus on Forestry First Ltd in accordance with its obligations and duties under the following European Regulations:

- Council Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
- Council Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013
- Council Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 640/2014
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 807/2014
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 808/2014
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 809/2014
- General Data Protection Regulation (EU) No 679/2016

The information will primarily be used for the purposes of processing and determining applications for financial support. However, Focus on Forestry First Ltd may also make use of the information supplied for other purposes, which will include those connected with its functions and duties under the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community and with its statutory environmental obligations.

Focus on Forestry First Ltd does not collect any special category data.

Your information will be stored in accordance with the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 908/2014, "Conservation of Accounting Information".

Reasons for sharing personal data

EU legislation requires checking of scheme eligibility, and to conduct these checks Welsh Government may share information with:

- Natural Resources Wales
- Animal and Plant Health Agency
- Veterinary Medicine Directorate
- Welsh Local Authorities
- Food Standards Agency Wales
- DEFRA
- Other UK Government Agriculture Offices.
- Regulatory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs, Local Authorities, Health and Safety Executive and the Police.

The information may be used for the following:

- compilation of reports of aggregated data and/or summary statistics to be made publicly available
- informing decisions relating to policy changes and funding including research studies conducted on behalf of the Welsh Government to inform Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Schemes
- protecting applicant's interest in land conservation and issues that may arise due to funding queries
- allowing partner organisations to fulfil their legal duties
- shared with fraud prevention agencies who will use it to prevent fraud and money- laundering and to verify your identity
- publication of certain information and responding to requests for information.

The Publication and Disclosure of Information

Your information, including your personal information, may be the subject of a request by another member of the public. When responding to such requests Focus on Forestry First Ltd may be required to release information, including your personal information.

Rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The GDPR gives individuals rights in respect of the personal data held on them. These rights include:

- the right to be informed (this notice)
- the right to ask for and receive copies of the personal data that the Welsh Government holds about them, although the Welsh Government can sometimes withhold some data or not provide copies
- the right, in some circumstances, to prevent or restrict the Welsh Government processing personal data
- the right, in some circumstances, to have wrong data rectified
- the right, in some circumstances, to have data erased (to be forgotten).

If you wish to exercise any of your rights under the GDPR, you should contact the Focus on Forestry First Ltd at the address provided at the beginning of this notice.

Individuals also have the right to ask the Information Commissioner, who enforces and oversees the GDPR, to assess whether or not the processing of their personal data is likely to comply with the GDPR. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House
Water Lane,
Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

Section F – Contact Details

Welsh Government's website: www.wales.gov.uk/environmentandcountryside and bi-monthly Gwlad magazine contain key information.

Contact details are as follows:



Focus on Forestry First

C/O Coed Pwllacca, Brynwern,
Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SE

Tel: 01982 448 110

info@focusonforestryfirst.co.uk.
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