

Croft Woodlands Project

The Croft Woodlands Project is a £1.1m, 5 year initiative which commenced in 2015. It aims to engage crofters in the creation and management of woodlands on their holdings; thus delivering multiple benefits in terms of shelter, agricultural diversification, forest products, landscape and the environment.

The Project is a partnership between the Scottish Crofting Federation, Woodland Trust Scotland Forestry Commission Scotland, Coigach & Assynt Living Landscapes, Point & Sandwick Development Trust and the Woodland Croft Partnership.

Woodland Trust Scotland employs three regional project officers on behalf of the Partnership covering the Highlands & Northern Isles, the Western Isles and Argyll & Lochaber respectively.

The Project offers free support to crofters, common grazings committees and smallholders within the crofting counties. Project officers carry out site assessments, offer technical advice and assist with access to funding. Advice is mainly focussed on new native woodland planting, but can also include management of existing woodland on the croft.

Where a site has clear potential to succeed as an application to the Scottish Government Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS), the Croft Woodlands Project will engage an independent forestry agent to develop a funding proposal on behalf of the crofter. This is funded service, however the cost may be recouped from the crofter if an FGS grant contract is successfully secured.

Small sites, or sites which are suitable for woodland creation but for which the FGS is inappropriate, will be offered direct assistance via the Woodland Trust's MOREwoods schemeⁱ. The MOREwoods scheme also offers support for planting hedgerows.

Options for provision of low-cost, short-term bridging finance to crofters are currently being explored.ⁱⁱ The aim is to ease cashflow problems for FGS schemes during the period between expenditure on establishment works and receipt of grant.

A programme of training events and knowledge transfer is being delivered as part of the project, and existing resources and publications relating to croft woodland are being reviewed and updated.

For further information please contact:

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ⁱ MOREwoods offers tree and protection measures (excluding fencing) at reduced or no cost to the crofter.

ⁱⁱ A Study of Barriers and Possible Solutions to Encouraging New Crofter Forestry Projects- Rural Analysis associates 2014