



**Cyfoeth  
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**Natural  
Resources**  
Wales

# Woodlands and You An Introduction

**Helping the people of Wales make more  
of their woodlands**



## **PROJECTS, EVENTS, ACTIVITIES on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate**

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## Introduction

**This guide is for individuals, community groups and social enterprises wanting to organise activities, events and projects in the Welsh Government Woodland Estate managed by Natural Resources Wales.**

Woodlands have huge potential to benefit communities in many ways – they can be used for training and enterprise ventures, health and well-being initiatives, arts and community regeneration programmes – the tree tops are the limit!

Both the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales are committed to making sure communities and social enterprises get the greatest possible benefit from the Woodland Estate. You can find out more about what Natural Resources Wales does on our [website](#):

We welcome proposals and approaches from **all** individuals, groups and social enterprises, and proposals can be made at any time. The woodlands of Wales are here for everyone. If you're planning to organise an activity, event or run a project on the Woodland Estate, you'll need to consider how to ensure as many people as possible across your community will know about it and have the opportunity to take part. Further information about equality and diversity issues can be found in Appendix 1 of this guide.

**Woodlands and You** aims to open the way for more people than ever to make the most of this resource. This introduction explains more about how this works and gives examples of the kind of activities and projects that have been supported in the past.

Every project is unique and will be considered individually. So if you have a proposal that appears to be different to those we mention, it's still worth contacting us. **In fact, it's essential that you [contact us](#) for an initial chat before you start any detailed planning work – so that we can support you all the way through the process!**

Natural Resources Wales is developing its approach to working with commercial organisations – please contact us if you have a proposal.

## 1. Our Commitment

We aim to make the process of running events and activities, and developing projects on the Woodland Estate as straightforward and enjoyable as possible. We will be listening to you to make sure the programme is working through:

- Regular review processes to ensure that proposal forms are clear and as easy to complete as possible
- Regular review processes to ensure that guidance and support is clear and easily accessible
- Ensuring that our staff are well trained and courteous
- Providing advice and information promptly, and signposting to other organisations when appropriate
- Consistent and fair decision making
- Responding to applications, correspondence and queries within published timescales
- Providing feedback for unsuccessful applicants where requested
- Requesting and acting on feedback from applicants

## 2. What kind of activity is possible?

### Activities Which Need No Consent

Much of the woodland we look after on behalf of the Welsh Government has public open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (unless open access is prevented by legal or title restrictions or by our forestry operations). That means members of the public are positively welcomed to use woodlands freely for a whole range of recreational activities.

At any time, if you see signs restricting access to woodland, please take heed and **do not enter the area**. They will be there because timber harvesting or other forestry operations are going on – even if you're unable to see or hear them from where you are. You'll be putting your safety at risk if you decide to ignore them.

No formal Permit or agreement is required for activities such as:

- Walking
- Picnicking
- Walks where no vehicle access is required
- Small, non-competitive cycling groups just out for a ride, rather than as part of an organised event
- Horse riding – if no gate key is required
- Self-led education walks
- Geocache activities
- Wild life surveys where no vehicle access is needed

If you're unsure whether or not the activity you have in mind may need consent, please [contact us](#)

## Activities Which Need Consent

Welsh Government woodlands can be busy places. Timber harvesting may be taking place or planned, and many different people and groups use woodlands for a variety of purposes.

For health and safety reasons, and to ensure that other users are not adversely affected or put at risk, we need to know about and give *in advance* consent to organised activities and events and any longer-term project development. Examples of these would include (and this is **not** an exhaustive list):

- Activities where vehicles need to be taken into the woodland
- Activities where people will be charged to take part
- Training and bush-craft courses and events
- Setting up stalls or tents
- Erecting signs, benches, creating paths
- Cutting back vegetation or undertaking agreed woodland management work
- Forest School type activities

In fact, anything that might result in Forest [Byelaws](#) being broken will need a formal consent – **again, please talk to us at an early stage.**

You'll need to consider how to ensure as many people as possible will know about the activity, event or project you're proposing and have the opportunity to take part if possible. You'll also need Public Liability Insurance cover of £5m for any activity, event or project that you undertake. It is required so that we know you are covered for any eventuality.

### 3. Woodlands and You Applications

On the Woodlands and You webpage, you'll find a range of Application Forms to suit your needs. All Forms can be downloaded, or contact us on 0300 065 3000 and we'll post them to you. **Before you start planning your activity or completing your Form, it's ESSENTIAL that you speak to your [Local Area Office staff](#) about what you have in mind** – we'll ensure that you have the correct Form, offer help and guidance and save time and effort all round.

Along with the Application Forms on the Woodlands and You webpage, there are Guidance Notes to help you fill them in - and examples of completed Forms. We're here to help, so contact us if there is anything you are unclear about.

All supporting documents we ask for must be sent with your fully completed application. When we have these **it will normally take us 12 weeks to carry out an assessment.** We cannot start considering applications until we have all the information we need.

The 12 week assessment period is needed so that full internal consultations about proposals can be completed. All Natural Resources Wales managed woodlands are working forests and are used by many different groups and individuals. We need to make sure that any activity, event or project is going to be safe and will not affect others using or working in the woodland.

Most proposals needing formal agreements will fall into one of these categories:

Woodlands and You Application Forms	Agreement Type
<b>Activities</b> Annual Permits for Individuals, Clubs, Businesses	Permit
<b>Events</b>	Permit
<b>Surveys</b> Conservation, Heritage and Archaeological	Permit
<b>Projects</b>	Management Agreement Lease

### Charges for Permits

Natural Resources Wales usually **charges** for issuing a Permit. Details are on the Woodlands and You webpage, or give us a call and we'll post them to you. There are some circumstances in which charges may be waived. If you think this is the case, please discuss this with us.

### Woodlands and You: Activities – Annual Permits

These are for regularly activities occurring regularly throughout the year, such as horse riding (where a Permit is necessary), dog sledding, carriage driving, keeping beehives, collecting foliage. They can be granted to individual people and to Clubs and businesses.

### Woodlands and You: Events and Multiple Events

If you're planning events you're likely to need a Permit, but do check with us. There are two Forms under this heading:

1. One-off Events (e.g. mountain bike challenges, large sponsored walks, triathlons, orienteering, filming, paintball, training, car rallies etc.) and,
2. Multiple Events - those that take place a number of times each year (e.g. fox control, dog sled training).

If you publicise your event before you have a signed Permit, ***this will be at your own risk should the application not be successful***. If you need to undertake publicity well before your event is due to start or take place, you must submit your proposal well in advance to account for the 12 week assessment period.

Before you complete the Form, you'll need to have thought about:

- Exactly what you plan to do
- Where and when the event will take place and how long it will last
- How many people will be involved
- Whether you'll need vehicle access
- Whether you'll need access pre and post event for setting up and take down
- What supporting facilities you'll need – e.g. portaloos, marshals, catering etc.
- How you'll ensure safety and provide insurance cover.

You'll also be asked to provide a Risk Assessment for all activities, events and projects. Advice on running events safely is available from the [Health and Safety Executive](#). Umbrella activity support bodies, such as the [British Horse Society](#), the [British Driving Society](#) or [British Orienteering](#) for example, may be able to offer specific advice.

### Woodlands and You: Conservation, Heritage and Archaeological Surveys

Permits are not always required for survey activity, though they will be required if you are proposing to take your vehicle into the woodland. Talk to your local Area Office first.

### Woodlands and You: Projects

These projects usually involve infrastructure installation, for example paths and trails, signage, sculptures, shelters - or agreed woodland management activity. If you are planning a project like this **please discuss it with us as a first step**. There may be specific management, local Forest Resource Plan or development issues that you'd need to take into account, or which make the project unsuitable in a specific location.

We'll do our best to work with you to resolve these issues.

Assuming initial discussions are positive, we'll need you to provide more details and information by completing the Woodlands and You: Projects application form.

Should your proposal be approved, you'll be offered either:

1. a Management Agreement - a fixed term contract setting out exactly what you are permitted to do - it does not give you exclusive use of the woodland or grant a legal interest in it.
2. a Lease – this does give you exclusive possession of a defined area, and would be suitable for e.g. community food projects or the construction of shelters or buildings.

Proposals for longer term projects are welcome from voluntary and community organisations of all types. Your organisation must have at least a basic constitution setting out your aims, a clear management structure, transparent membership criteria, be able to demonstrate clear links with the woodland concerned and with other local organisations.

The Application Form will ask you to demonstrate how your project will contribute to meeting the aims of Woodlands for Wales. This is the Welsh Government's 50-year strategy for the management, development and creation of woodlands in Wales. The four key themes of the Strategy and proposed outcomes for each of these are listed in Appendix 3 below, and you can download a full copy from the Forestry Commission Wales website. If your project is contributing to other local strategies or plans, tell us about that too.

### Leasing or Buying a Welsh Government Woodland

Your social enterprise may wish to take over full responsibility for management of a woodland to deliver greater long-term benefits for local communities. This would require a lease with exclusive occupation rights or outright purchase, and may be considered where such benefits have been demonstrated and evidenced – final decisions are made by the Welsh Government Minister responsible for the Woodland Estate. Again, **the first step is to discuss your proposals with your local Area Office staff**. Should the proposal proceed, you'll need to complete the Woodlands and You: Projects application form as set out above, though additional information will be needed as the proposal progresses.

Woodlands are leased and sold at market value and you'll need to budget for your group's legal costs. Leases and sales may be considered where:

- The woodland concerned is freehold;
- There is limited existing stakeholder interest in the woodland ;
- The woodland is in either a stand-alone block or on the edge of a larger block with its own access routes;
- It is clear that your plans could only be met by a lease or purchase of the woodland and that a Management Agreement or Permit would be inappropriate.

### Use of Timber

Requests to use small amounts of timber as part of your activity or project (for example, woodland management training, making small items to sell) may be considered. All timber will be disposed of at market value. Each request will be considered on a case by case basis within the following guidelines:

- A basic, prescriptive **management plan** will be agreed with local Area Office staff. These must:
  - contribute to delivery of the Forest Resource Plan and 'Woodlands for Wales' objectives
  - specify the area to be worked
  - provide a precise description of the work to be undertaken
  - provide an estimate of the timber volumes involved.
- Natural Resources Wales will **monitor and record** all harvested timber and charge at the agreed rate.

### 4. How Your Proposal is assessed

When we receive your application form we'll check all required supporting documentation. If all details have been included, the proposal will then be circulated for local Area Office staff to comment on, ensuring that we have enough information from local staff to make the right decision.

We'll aim to come back to you with a decision within 12 weeks days of receipt of a fully completed proposal. We will be looking for confirmation that:

- You've provided details about yourself or your group
- It's clear what you want to do and where you want to do it - the proposal has been thought through and is well planned and will be managed safely
- We know how many people will take part, whether or not they'll be charged, what facilities will be provided and if vehicles will be taken into the woodland.

### Longer Term Projects

Again, we'll check to make sure you have sent us all required supporting documentation. If all details have been included, the proposal will then be circulated for Area Office staff to comment on, for the same reasons as above. It may be necessary to discuss and agree amendments. We'll be looking for confirmation that:

- Your proposal is helping to deliver Woodlands for Wales outcomes
- You've provided full details of what you plan to do, where and when it will take place and what the benefits will be
- You've provided details of your organisation – how it's constituted and managed, how people can join, the skills members will bring to develop and manage your project
- There is evidence of need for the project, local support for it and details of any partner organisations
- You'll be able to resource the work and maintain it in the long term.

We'll aim to come back to you with a decision within 12 weeks of receipt of a fully completed proposal.

### Leasing or Buying a Welsh Government Woodland

When we receive your application form, we'll check to make sure you have sent us all required supporting documentation. If all details have been included, the proposal will then be circulated for Natural Resources Wales staff to comment on. It may be necessary to discuss and agree amendments.

We'll come back to you with an *in principle* decision within 12 weeks of receipt of a fully completed proposal.

If the evidence provided at this point indicates that the lease proposal is strong enough to proceed, additional information will be required, e.g. detailed business case, woodland management plan, formal valuation.

An Evaluation Panel (with both Natural Resources Wales officers and independent representatives) will consider the detailed proposals and recommend to the Welsh Government Minister responsible for the Woodland Estate whether or not a disposal should be supported.

As this part of the process is likely to be more complex, a timescale for making a decision will be discussed and agreed with you and you will be kept fully informed of progress at all times. In all cases, if we are not able to approve your proposal, we will tell you why.

## 5. Case Studies

These are some of the many projects which have already successfully organised events and activities and developed projects on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate:

### *Improved Access*

Cwm Celyn Tenants and Residents Association, Blaenau Gwent entered into a Management Agreement with Natural Resources Wales to link in the local woodland with a trail around the nearby Cwm Celyn Pond. This created new community walks and increased community access and involved the following main elements:

- **Entrance:** Upgrading and landscaping and the car park and entrance to the woodland and the installation of a small picnic site
- **Improved access** and pathways through the site, with associated drainage works, including a small pond.
- **Planting** of native broadleaved trees following the removal of some conifers prior to the project commencing.
- The creation of an "amphitheatre" for use as an **outdoor classroom**

### *Community Facilities*

The Aberystwyth based Second Penparcau Scout Group needed a woodland location where they could build a Log Cabin and undertake a range of scouting activities. Working with Natural Resources Wales, the group identified the woodland of Cwmnewyddion as being ideal for their needs - close to Aberystwyth with good existing access. The group now leases an area of the woodland, has built their Cabin, improved footpaths, created a camping area, constructed bird hides and developed a small vegetable plot. The Scouts now meet on a weekly basis in the woodland to undertake activities and maintain the facilities that they have constructed. Membership of the Group is increasing and members of the local community have also started to use and benefit from the facilities.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

Cwmsaebren woodland near Treherbert is used on a regular basis by a group of local people wanting to improve their health after serious illness. Coed Lleol has a Permit with Natural Resources Wales to run a range of fun practical activities with the group, e.g. bush-craft, access creation, woodland skills – all supervised by qualified staff. The wood is in an excellent location for the group – next to the town centre with good access and open spaces. The initiative is doing well - providing both an alternative venue for people who would not use a conventional gym and giving them an effective and enjoyable start to a more active and healthier lifestyle.

### *Habitat Creation and Management*

Kilvey Hill Volunteers work with Natural Resources Wales to undertake conservation and habitat creation work in Kilvey Hill wood, Swansea. The group meets on a regular basis, undertaking tasks such as weeding, cleaning, and vegetation management to encourage wildlife. They also undertake habitat restoration work such as conifer removal, heather seed collection and sowing with the objective of restoring a valuable area of upland heather heath land. The volunteers also undertake footpath maintenance, sculpture and art work maintenance organise litter picking events and lead guided walks.

### *Fundraising Activities and Events*

Many community organisations obtain Permits to run fundraising events in the Woodland Estate. Forest roads, paths and bike trails are often used for sponsored walks and rides, with the advantage that they are free of traffic and rich in scenery.

### *Arts Projects*

In North Wales, in the heart of the Gwydyr forest, an exciting theatrical event was developed by Cynefin Community Arts and local social enterprise, Golygfa Gwydyr, who entered into a Management Agreement with Natural Resources Wales. The forest was chosen as a location for a unique theatrical art form that stimulates all the senses. The productions, which explored Welsh history, culture, language and legends took place in a labyrinth of pathways through the forest. As well as taking part in the performances, Golygfa Gwydyr built the pathways with help from other local volunteers and artists. The group has gone from strength to strength and has now diversified to pursue further social, economic and environmental projects.

## 6. Support and Information

Developing and managing an event, activity or project can be complex – you may need some advice and guidance along the way.

If you're planning an event or activity, you'll need Public Liability Insurance cover of £5m, a risk assessment, maps etc.

If your project is more complex, you'll need to be a legally constituted body, undertake local consultation, ensure legal compliance etc.

Natural Resources Wales officers will actively support the development of your proposal as far as possible, for example with the provision of:

- Advice and guidance on the Woodlands and You proposal process
- Assistance with woodland maps
- Woodland management best practice
- Woodlands for Wales guidance
- Information about local woodlands and Forest Resource Plans
- Knowledge of other local groups and potential partners
- Explanation of basic risk assessment processes
- Advice on felling and planting licenses

If however you need advice on how to set up your group, where potential sources of funding might be, how to reach and involve all members of your community, planning guidance etc., you'll need to talk to people with specific expertise in these areas.

There are many expert third and public sector organisations out there to offer assistance – and other groups who can share their practical experiences of undertaking similar work. [Llais y Goedwig](#) is the community woodland network in Wales and can offer advice, networking opportunities and best practice guidance – their contact details are listed along with those of other support bodies on the Woodlands and You webpage.

## 7. Frequently Asked Questions

### I've got an idea – who should I contact to discuss it?

You need to talk to your local Area Office – have a look at the map on the Woodlands and You webpage for all contact details and to check where your woodland is.

### Will I need insurance?

Yes, as a minimum you'll need Public Liability Insurance of £5million to be able to run an activity, event or project on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. You should check with your insurer and /or your local County Voluntary Council to see if you need further policy cover.

### Why does Natural Resources Wales need us to apply for Permit 12 weeks before the activity or event?

Welsh Government woodlands can be busy places. Timber harvesting may be taking place or planned, and many different people and groups use woodlands for all kinds of activities. For health and safety reasons, and to ensure that other users are not adversely affected, we need to know about and give *in advance* consent to events and activities and any project development. Thorough consultation with all local staff is essential and this takes time.

### Who is responsible for informing other forest users of my event/activity?

You are. Natural Resources Wales will provide you with a list of relevant contact details. You will also be responsible for gaining consent (if required) from for example the local police or highways authority.

### How do we fill in a risk assessment?

You'll be asked to provide a Risk Assessment for all activities, events and projects. Advice on running events safely is available from the [Health and Safety Executive](#). Umbrella activity support bodies, such as the [British Horse Society](#), the [British Driving Society](#) or [British Orienteering](#) for example, may be able to offer specific advice.

### My proposal has been turned down – can I appeal?

Of course – write to us setting out the reasons that you think the wrong decision has been made. We'll take another look and respond to you.

### What should we do if we want information regarding our local woodland?

Talk to your local Area Office – have a look at the map on page 3 of this guide for all contact details. It might be that Natural Resources Wales doesn't manage the woodland you're interested in, but we'll do our best to tell you who does.

### What will happen if other groups are already using the woodland?

It depends what you plan to do. Woodlands are big places and one of the great things about them is that it's easy to get away from others. Occasionally, however, it may be that conflicting activities make it necessary for a proposal to be turned down in a particular location. This is especially the case with, for example, requests to lease areas of busy, multi-purpose woodlands.

### What will happens if our group folds mid-way through the term of the agreement?

Sadly, sometimes groups do come to a natural end – we understand that. If your group has an agreement with us and is experiencing difficulties of any kind, please talk to us as soon as you can and we'll do our best to help.

### [How can schools use woodland?](#)

We welcome schools in the woodlands we manage. Talk to us first about what you plan to do – you may not need a formal consent. If you're planning Forest School activities, you may need a Permit and you'll need to complete the appropriate Application Form.

### [What do we do if there is antisocial activity in our local woodland?](#)

Talk to your local Area Office – contact details are on the Woodlands and You webpage. It might be that Natural Resources Wales doesn't manage the woodland you're interested in, but we'll do our best to tell you who does.

### [We want to use the timber from the woodland, can we do that?](#)

See the 'Use of Timber' guidance at section 3 of this guide.

## Appendix 1 - Equality and Diversity

We positively welcome proposals and approaches from all groups – particularly those protected under law. The woodlands of Wales are here for everyone, regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation

If you're planning a project or event in a Natural Resources Wales managed woodland, you'll need to consider how to ensure everyone in your community knows about it and has the opportunity to take part.

*Equality* is about creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

*Diversity* is about recognising and valuing difference in the broadest sense. It is about understanding that everyone is different and that all people have requirements that we need to take into account so they can participate in day-to-day life as fully as possible.

Our society is diverse, with people of different ages, races, abilities and disabilities, different religions and beliefs, different genders and sexual orientations. We need to learn from the experiences and needs of all these groups to provide the best service we can.

Natural Resources Wales respects and values the benefits that diversity brings. Raising awareness of, consulting on and responding to equality and diversity issues helps ensure we are truly inclusive and the services we provide and opportunities we offer are accessible to everyone throughout Wales. We screen all our policies and activities and undertake an Equality Impact Assessment for all those which directly affect people and communities who use the woodlands we manage and the staff we employ.

## Appendix 2 – Welsh Language

It's recommended that you develop and adopt a Welsh Language policy if you don't already have one. Will all your signage and promotional material be bi-lingual? Useful sources of information and support include:

- [Estyn Llaw](#) - the Estyn Llaw scheme was established in 2000 to offer support and guidance to voluntary and community groups to increase their use of Welsh, and to encourage volunteering amongst Welsh speakers.
- [Natural Resources Wales / Welsh Language Scheme](#)

## Appendix 3 - Woodlands for Wales

This 50-year Welsh Government strategy acknowledges the role that woodlands and trees can play in improving the lives of everyone in Wales, in sustaining the wider environment and in providing opportunities for people and communities.

In making your proposal for an activity, event or project, you'll need to demonstrate how you'll be helping to achieve one or more of its four key themes:

### ***Responding to Climate Change***

- Welsh woodlands contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of Wales

### ***Woodlands for People***

- More communities benefit from woodlands and trees
- More people enjoy the life-long learning benefits of woodlands and their products
- More people live healthier lives as a result of their use and enjoyment of woodlands
- More people benefit from woodland related enterprises

### ***Competitive and Integrated Forest Sector***

- More Welsh grown timber is used in Wales
- The forest sector is better integrated and more competitive, supporting the Welsh economy
- Increased use of timber as a key renewable resource
- A thriving, skilled workforce in the forestry sector

### ***Environmental Quality***

- Woodland management achieves high standards of environmental stewardship
- Woodlands and trees of special conservation value are in favourable management
- Woodland biodiversity is supported and native woodland is in favourable management
- Woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to the special landscape character of Wales and to sites of heritage and cultural importance
- New and existing trees and woodland contribute to water and soil management