

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 17 DECEMBER 2002**

### **THE AYRSHIRE WOODLANDS LOCATIONAL PREMIUM**

#### **Report by Director of Development Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee about the Locational Premium, a new grant being offered by the Scottish Executive to encourage woodland planting.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive's Forestry Strategy 'Forest for Scotland' published in 2000, set out a range of priorities for the management and development of Scotland's woods and forests. The Scottish Executive's review of the Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme in 2001 recommended that there should be a greater Scottish focus for the Forestry Commission's grants in Scotland. In April 2002 the Executive announced the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) and the SFGS Farmland Premium to replace the existing schemes.
- 2.2 In recognition of the formal approval of the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy and as a means of assisting achievement of its aims and objectives, the Scottish Ministers have decided to offer an additional Locational Premium in Ayrshire to encourage local farmers and landowners to establish specific types of woodlands in the priority locations identified through the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy.

#### **3. DETAILS OF LOCATIONAL PREMIUM**

- 3.1 A sum of £1.2m for an initial period of three years is being allocated to the Forestry Commission for granting of the Locational Premium for new woodlands within Ayrshire. The scheme is due to start in January 2003.
- 3.2 The Forestry Commission has consulted members of the Steering Group for the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy about the criteria which should apply to the Locational Premium and their recommendations have been used to formulate the rules of the scheme.
- 3.3 The Locational Premium will be paid in addition to the normal SFGS payments for schemes satisfying the SFGS requirements and meeting one of the following objectives:

- establishing a well-designed productive forest or
- expanding native and riparian woodland or
- improving the environment of post industrial areas or
- improving the quality and setting of specific urban areas or
- diversifying the farmed landscape

3.4 The Locational Premium will apply only within those areas identified for woodland planting on the key diagram of the recently approved Ayrshire Woodland Strategy. The Premium is offered within these areas to encourage the development of proposals that enhance the urban and rural landscape, offer new and attractive opportunities for public access and recreation, improve woodland habitats and provide timber for the future.

#### **4. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Locational Premium in East Ayrshire is welcomed and will assist in achieving the Council's aims with regard to preserving and supplementing broadleaf and native tree species as set out in Policy ENV 15 of the Local Plan and facilitating the preservation and enhancement of local biodiversity in accordance with the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Strategy.

4.2 The Locational Premium will increase the scope for provision of multi-use woodlands especially with regard to increasing communities' access to the countryside in line with Local Plan Policies TLR7 and ENV 16 (iii).

4.3 Any increased forestry activity resulting from the take up of the Locational Premium could also increase timber traffic associated with planting operations. Such effects would need to be monitored by the Ayrshire Timber Transport Group.

4.4 Any urban fringe planting proposals would have to take account of the potential for future edge of town developments and be monitored in the context of the ongoing Local Plan review.

#### **5. PROPOSED AYRSHIRE WOODLANDS FORUM AND PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR**

5.1 It has been suggested by the Forestry Commission that the Councils and other bodies with an interest in the implementation of the Woodlands Strategy should consider appointing a Project Co-ordinator to work with an Ayrshire woodlands Forum. The Forestry Commission have themselves indicated they would contribute towards the cost of such a post.

5.2 The principal functions of the post would be to raise awareness of the Ayrshire Woodland Strategy, assist land owners and forestry businesses to promote projects which support the aims of the strategy,

promote community engagement in the implementation of the strategy, encourage new jobs in forestry and wood processing sectors, and help to attract new investment in transport infrastructure.

- 5.3 Promotion of forestry is an important aspect of rural diversification which has been identified as a key strand of future economic development strategy by the Ayrshire Economic Forum, as previously reported to this Committee. It is significant that the Forestry Commission themselves view forestry as having a wider economic significance and that this is one reason for their enthusiastic support of the Ayrshire Woodlands Strategy.
- 5.4 These proposals have been the subject of initial discussion with representatives of the three Ayrshire Councils. They will be developed in conjunction with the Ayrshire Economic Forum. A further report will be submitted to this Committee when detailed proposals have been drawn up.

## **6. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal or financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) draw the attention of the Forestry Commission to the planning implications of the locational premium as set out in Section 4 above; and
  - (b) note that a further report will be submitted to this Committee on proposals to establish an Ayrshire woodlands Forum and a Project Co-ordinator to support the implementation of the Ayrshire woodlands Strategy.

**Stephen Chorley**  
**Director of Development Services**  
9 December 2002 (SC/JT/SA)

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Ayrshire Woodland Strategy.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above papers please contact Julian Thorp on (01563) 576789.

**Implementation Officer: Alan Neish**