

Shelter belts for Common Grazings

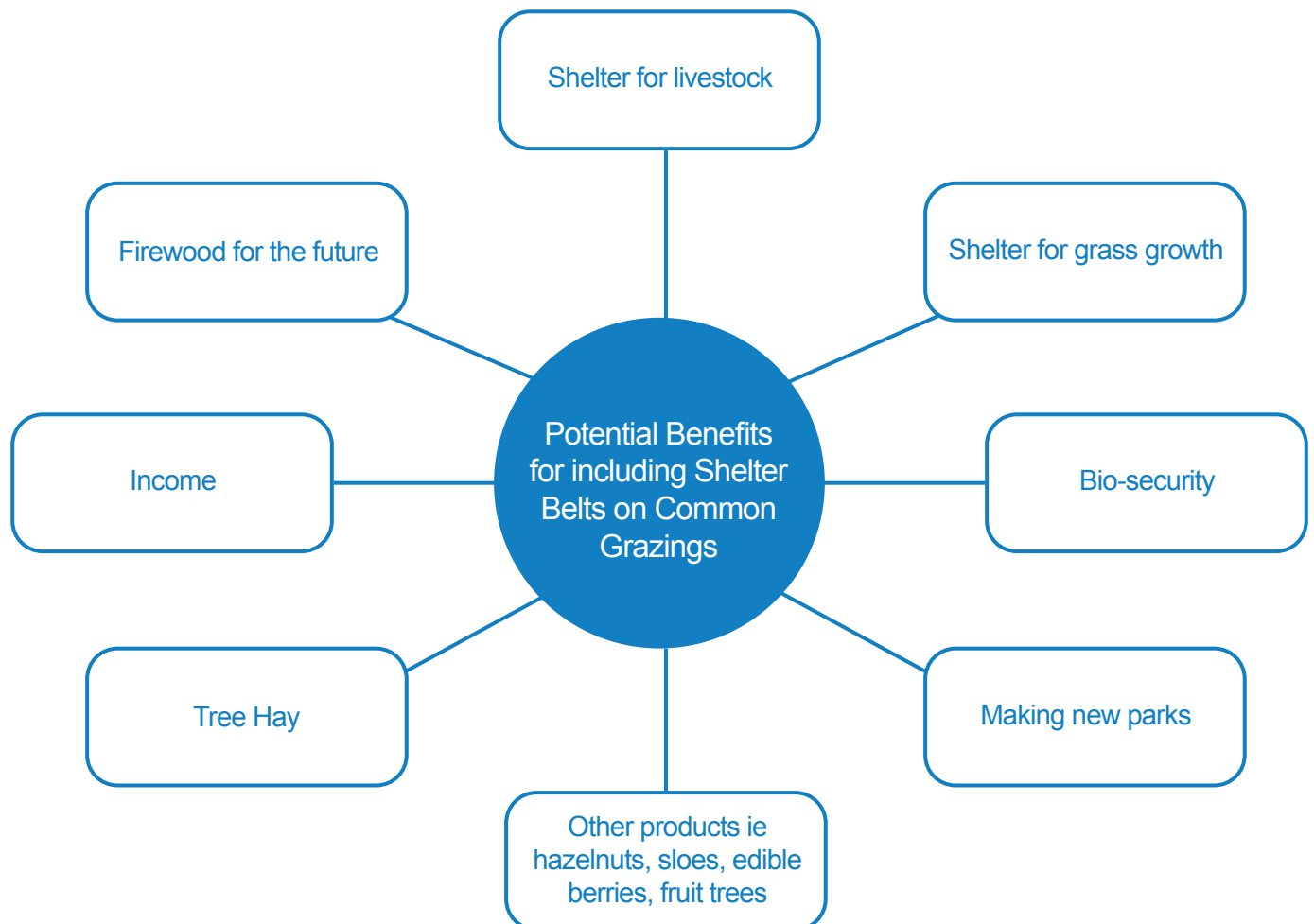


**Farm
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Introduction

There are many potential benefits to shelterbelts on common grazings. These benefits will vary depending on the location, exposure, species of trees chosen, and your agricultural practises.



Trees for crofts and smallholding guide to species:
https://www.fas.scot/?post_type=download&p=28158&preview=true

The Importance of Shelterbelt Planning

A key part of woodland creation now is the mantra “The right tree, in the right place, for the right reasons”. It is essential to get these three criteria right at the outset of any project in order to ensure the best chance of successful establishment of new trees.

In this guide, we cover key aspects to consider, and signpost you to further advice and support to allow you to create the best shelterbelt for your Common Grazing.

Grant Support:

There are several avenues for grant support to assist with the creation of shelterbelts on common grazings; for fuller comparison of CAGS and FGS for establishing shelterbelts on Common Grazings, please see FAS Publication “Grant Support for Croft Woodland Creation: A Comparison”.

Shelterbelt Sizes:

To provide effective shelter for livestock, the recommended width for a shelterbelt is 20 metres. Please note that for CAGS funding, a shelterbelt should not normally be less than 5 metres wide.

Whereas the minimum sizes for the Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) are more specific than the CAGS scheme. FGS eligibility criteria specify a minimum width of 15 metres, but most applications use 20 m width from fence to fence.

Minimum size 0.25 ha native broadleaved scheme, and minimum size of 2 hectares for a commercial conifer or productive broadleaved scheme.

Locating your Shelterbelt within your Commons Grazings:

Shelterbelts take a long time to establish fully, and as such it is best to plan for the future before you begin to plant.

Consider stock movement requirements, access needs, and both summer and winter weather when siting your shelterbelt – shelterbelts can provide relief for livestock year-round if orientated correctly within your grazing system, and can aid in herding/handling stock between field units.

For more in depth information, we recommend the below guide documents:

Trees for Shelter reference:

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/6925/FCTP021.pdf>

Trees for livestock shelter:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1730/benefits-of-tree-shelter-for-livestock.pdf>

FAS Shelter Woods and Woodland Grazing:

<https://www.fas.scot/downloads/powerpoint-fas-shelterbelts-grazing>

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Tree Protection:



Trees need careful attention during their early establishment, and will require protection from browsing/grazing for at least the first 10 years of their life after planting depending on growth rates/species.

Consider browsing pressures from voles, deer, rabbits, hares, as well as domestic livestock (both in your units, and in neighbouring fields).

Although trees will provide shelter once fully grown, they may need help establishing in very exposed conditions – if so, you may need to seek bespoke advice for your specific location from a specialist woodland advisor. Common routes for protecting trees during establishment include fencing (deer or stock fencing depending on local browsing pressures), and for small areas, tree shelters such as Tubex shelters and stakes.

Deer fencing may be supported through CAGS if there is an identified risk of deer damage to the shelterbelt during initial design and application, and grant support may be conditional on having adequate protection measures against deer damage in place.

Soil Conditions:

Every tree species has different soil requirements for full establishment – some will tolerate waterlogged soils, strong winds and salt spray on coastal sites, but others are far more sensitive to exposure. When designing your shelterbelt, a key consideration must be the soils you are planting, and the soil moisture regime and

nutrient regime of the site. A useful resource is Forest Research's ESC tool online <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/esc4m.jsp#>, which shows suitable tree species for a site when selected on the online map system. If you're uncertain about your soil conditions, speak to an agricultural advisor regarding soil sampling for pH and fertility. For further advice on suitable species, refer to FAS Farm Woodland Information Notes: Quick Guide to Broadleaved Tree Species, and Farm Woodland Information Note: Quick Guide to Conifer Trees.

<https://www.fas.scot/publication/farm-woodland-information-note-quick-guide-to-conifer-trees/>

<https://www.fas.scot/publication/farm-woodland-information-note-quick-guide-to-broadleaved-tree-species/>

Spacings and tree species composition may vary for each Common Grazings based on objectives/site conditions and other variables- for additional help selecting species to meet your objectives and suitable for your Common Grazings, see section "Getting Further Advice for your Common Grazings". Drainage, as part of a shelterbelt establishment application, may also be supported under CAGS, and will potentially allow a wider range of species to be suitable for a site than an un-drained site.

Best practice for planting trees specifies not to plant on soils containing deep peat of more than 50cm of depth. Therefore, initial investigations into shelterbelt planning should incorporate a peat depth survey for the area in consideration. At a rudimentary level, this can be carried out by digging sample points every 50 metres on a grid basis to assess the depth of peat within the soil profile.

Crofting Law:

Shelterbelts should be considered the same as any improvement on a Common Grazings, therefore the Common Grazings Committee should follow the procedures relating to improvements. For further advice on this, please contact the FAS helpline **0300 323 0161** or the Crofting Commission Grazings Team grazings@crofting.gov.scot

Carbon Funding:

For a larger shelterbelt programme, it may be worth exploring the additional benefits Carbon Credit Sales can bring to your Common Grazings Committee- Carbon Credits are increasingly being sold to support

woodland creation within the UK, and are being used to offset emissions as part of the move towards a more Carbon-Neutral economy. For further information on Carbon Credits, please see "Insert FAS Guide" or <https://woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/>

Getting Further Advice for your Common Grazings:

For site-specific guidance, call the FAS Enquiry line **0300 323 0161** or additionally, you may be eligible for a FAS Specialist Advice Plan which could provide up to £1,000 Grant Funding to explore Woodland Conservation and Management on your Common Grazings. <https://www.fas.scot/specialist-advice/>