

31st March 2009

Ref: 6/2009

To the forester or company
named in the address

Afforestation Grant & Premium Schemes

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to advise on the latest position re the forestry schemes and to outline changes to the approval process for the afforestation schemes

Afforestation, FEPS, NWS Establishment

1. In view of the very large number of approvals which do not go ahead but which remain as a financial commitment of the Department it has been decided that as and from 6th April 2009 only technical approvals will issue in respect of these schemes.
2. If planting will definitely commence within 4 weeks it will be necessary for the owner/applicant, as distinct from the forester or forestry company, to formally notify the Forest Service in writing **within** the four week period prior to commencement of planting in order to receive financial approval to proceed.
3. When financial approval issues the Forest Service will follow up with the applicant by field inspection or otherwise as to whether work has started within the agreed timeframe.
4. If, after financial approval has issued, the applicant is unable to go ahead with the planting the Forest Service must be notified immediately. At that stage the financial approval will be withdrawn but the technical approval will remain.
5. If, following notification outlined in 2. above, planting does not go ahead and the Forest Service is not notified both the financial and technical approvals will be withdrawn and a new application (Form 1) will be required if it is intended to subsequently plant the site.
6. Form 2 must be submitted within two months of the completion date as set out in the letter of approval. If necessary any outstanding supporting documentation can be submitted at a later date.

Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme and NWS Scheme (Conservation)

We are currently carrying out with your co-operation a detailed examination of our existing liabilities for these schemes and will notify you as quickly as possible as to the status of existing applications and technical approvals.

Forest Road Scheme

As above, a detailed examination is currently taking place to determine our existing liabilities under this scheme. All existing applications not yet approved and future applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Applications will be approved solely on a “just-in-time, just-enough” basis – i.e. approvals will be restricted to applications for roads in plantations where thinning/harvesting is imminent and will take place within the next two years. Roothing density will be limited – only the minimum amount of roadway required, not necessarily the current maximum of 25m per hectare. The maximum forwarding distance should normally not be less than 400m.
- Road density shall not exceed 25m/ha. There will be no discretion above 25m/ha.
- No development / management roads will be approved.
- All rooting expenditure must represent value for money and claims submitted for grant aid must represent the actual costs incurred.
- Breakdown of costs must be provided in advance.
- A road map must be submitted showing clearly which plots are within 2 years of harvesting. Plot inventory details must also accompany each road application i.e. diameter at breast height (DBH), top height, species and planting year for each plot.
- Where co-operative road applications are more cost effective and sustainable, road grants on a single application may be refused.

High Pruning of Conifer Scheme and Shaping of Broadleaves Scheme

In the current financial climate it will not be possible to open these schemes in 2009.

Deer Fencing Scheme

1. This scheme applies to existing woodland only. Applications to deer fence new afforestation sites can be made under the Afforestation Scheme.
2. Funding for deer fencing will not be considered if there is no significant threat of deer damage.
3. Funding is limited to a maximum of 150 metres per hectare and applies to the area enclosed and protected by the deer fence.

4. Additional metres erected in excess of the 150-metre threshold will not be grant aided.

Woodland Improvement Scheme

In the current financial climate it will not be possible to re-launch the existing Woodland Improvement Scheme in 2009. However applications for thinning/tending of younger broadleaf plantations as well as removal of brown bud ash will be considered, on their merits, under a more restricted Woodland Improvement Scheme. The maximum grant will be €750 per hectare with a cap of €20,000 per application.

Overheads

Please note that following the termination of the Self Assessment Scheme the maximum allowable overheads for the support schemes will be not more than 30% of direct costs for all works completed after 28th March 2009.

Yours sincerely

Gerry Fogarty
Assistant Principal