



22 December 2022

Circular 22/2022

To all Registered Foresters and other Stakeholders

Forestry programme 2023 – 2027 - Interim arrangements

The new Forestry Programme 2023-2027 will come into force in early 2023 subject to State Aid approval from the EU Commission. This process is ongoing, and all stakeholders will be updated on progress as the State Aid application moves closer to completion. The Department is currently considering and integrating feedback from stakeholders and the public further to the public consultation held from October to November and, subject to State Aid approval, will launch the new Programme as soon as is allowable.

In the meantime, the Minister has approved an interim solution for afforestation and roads namely:

- a) Interim Afforestation Scheme (via General De Minimis)
- b) Interim Forest Road Scheme (via General De Minimis)

These schemes are being offered to those applicants that on 31/12/22 hold a valid technical approval for Afforestation or Roads, but have not commenced work on planting or road construction in 2022, and do not wish to wait until the launch of the Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027. The schemes have been published and are available on the Department's website: www.gov.ie/forestry; see information under Forestry grants and schemes

Licensing applications for afforestation and roads that are not subject to grant aid will continue to be accepted.

Please note there are no changes to felling licences and any valid felling licence may proceed as before.

All beneficiaries of premiums under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020 (extended to 2022) are not affected and will continue to receive payments.

De Minimis

De minimis payments must be cumulated with other forms of de minimis aid, including de minimis aid received through the agriculture sector and/or other sectors (Commission Regulation (EU) No 1408/2013). In these cases the threshold is €200,000 over three fiscal years.

The terms and condition for both schemes are available on the DAFM website at: www.gov.ie/forestry; see information under Forestry grants and schemes.

Options:

The options available to those applicants that have a valid technical approval in place which issued up to 31/12/2022 and is out of the 14 day appeal window, but have not commenced work on planting or road constructions in 2022 are:

- a) Postpone planting or road construction until the launch of the new Forestry Programme 2023 - 2027 and opt-in to the new Programme by agreeing to adhere to any conditions therein.
- b) Opt-in to the interim Afforestation/Forest Road schemes (via General De Minimis) – the grants and premiums payable for these schemes are the proposed grants and premiums outlined in the Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027, however they are subject to General De Minimis rules.

Next Steps:

If the applicant with a valid approval wishes to await the launch of the Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027, no further action is required.

If the applicant with a valid approval wishes to opt-in to the interim schemes they must:

- Sign up to the terms and conditions of the Interim Afforestation Scheme (via General De Minimis) or the Interim Forest Road Scheme (via General De Minimis).
- Sign a De Minimis declaration.
- Declare which Forest Type(s) they are applying for.

Relevant forms are attached to the 'Forestry Early 2023 Interim Arrangements -FAQs' which will be available on www.gov.ie/forestry

All eligible applicants will be notified of this interim arrangement option next week.

***Please note there is no option to revert to the new Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027 if an applicant opts for the General De Minimis schemes.**

Joanne Adams

Assistant Principal officer

Forestry Division

Circular 22/2022