



27th April 2023

Circular 08 /2023

To all Registered Foresters and other Stakeholders

Requirement for habitat map for afforestation applications

The Department intends to continue carrying out Appropriate Assessment Reports for most applications for forestry licences and scheme approvals, rather than requiring applicants to submit Natura Impact Statements (NISs).

However, to assist the Department in this process, good site-level information is essential. Consequently, a Habitat Map must now accompany all Form 1 afforestation applications, in addition to the Biodiversity Map. Guidance on compiling Habitat Maps can be found in Circular 13 of 2020.

In addition, prior to submission of an application, any ecological sensitivities relating to the proposed afforestation area and its environs must be identified (e.g. SPAs within foraging distance and proposed site suitability for foraging etc., the presence of onsite badger setts). Additional information and proposed mitigation relevant to the sensitivities identified must then be provided in order to assist with the assessment of the application by DAFM.

The above will be mandatory for any afforestation application received by the Department from the date of the launch of the new Forestry Programme 2023-2027.

In relation to files on hand, unless a Further Information Request (FIR) is sent to an applicant, it can be assumed that DAFM will carry out any necessary habitat field work.

By way of update in relation to the Forestry Programme, the Department has been working intensively with the European Commission to secure State Aid approval for the



new Programme. The formal submission for State Aid approval was lodged last week. The Commission will now formally assess the application and make a determination on the request for State Aid approval. If and when that has been received, and the necessary Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) completed, we will be in a position to launch the new Programme.

The new Forestry Programme will differ in many ways from the outgoing Programme and further details will be provided upon approval. This may include changes to land eligibility for afforestation and information required with all applications for afforestation.

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