



Circular 16/2023
14th September 2023

To all Registered Foresters and other Stakeholders

RE: Opt-in to New Afforestation Scheme 2023–2027 for valid licence holders

As you know, the new Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 has been opened by the Department. We have now written to holders of valid Afforestation licences offering them the opportunity to opt in to have their current licence assessed under the new conditions of this scheme.

The attached letter (Appendix 1) has issued this week to the relevant applicants, and they will have to complete the declaration (Appendix 2) in order to opt in.

The registered forester can return this opt in form along with the “Environmental Declaration by Forester” attached to this circular (Appendix 3) when submitting the Form 1a - application for financial approval. You can return the required documents by email to forestryappengq@agriculture.gov.ie

Please note that opting into the scheme does not guarantee that a site will be suitable under the new rules.

Full details of the Scheme and a Frequently Asked Questions document are available on the Department’s website at www.gov.ie/forestry

Martina Monaghan

Higher Executive Officer

Forestry Division

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Appendix 1: Text of letter that issued to licence holders

RE: Opt-in to New Afforestation Scheme 2023–2027

Dear Applicant,

The new Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 has now been opened by the Department. As you have a valid Afforestation licence under the previous Scheme, which you have not used, you must now opt into the new scheme if you wish to plant and claim grant aid and premiums. There are differences in the new scheme and these may affect whether you can plant all or some of the area you have applied for, and you must also sign up to the new Terms and Conditions. The new Scheme offers increased grants and premiums (see Appendix 2).

The differences in the new scheme, compared to the previous scheme under which your licence was approved, are most notably:

- Grant and Premium Categories (GPCs) have been replaced by Forest Types (FTs) – see Appendix 1 attached to this letter.
- Payment rates have been increased – see Appendix 2 for the new rates. Applicants who qualify for farmer status will now be paid Afforestation premiums for a period of 20 years, while non farmers will be paid premium for 15 years.
- GPC1 (unenclosed land) is no longer eligible for grant aid or licence approval. Therefore, the Department will proceed to remove GPC1 areas from your application.
- The afforestation element of the former Creation of Woodlands on Public Lands Scheme has now been incorporated into the new Afforestation Scheme as FT3.
- There is now a requirement to plant a minimum of 20% broadleaves as part of your application.
- Certain areas of the country may no longer be eligible for grant aid due to more exacting requirements related to - High Nature Value farmland, certain peat soil types, breeding wader bird species and freshwater pearl mussel.
- Full details of the new Afforestation Scheme are available on our website at www.gov.ie/forestry

Next steps:

In order to have your current licence assessed to determine its eligibility under the new scheme, you will need to “opt in”. You can do so by completing and signing the attached declaration on page 7 of this letter and indicating which Forest Type you now wish to apply for. You can give this declaration to your forester who can then submit it along with your Form 1a (application for financial approval).

Once you opt-in to the new scheme, your application will be assessed by DAFM to ensure that it meets the requirements of the new scheme. Once assessed, you will be advised if your application has been granted financial approval and any areas removed will be identified. You will have the option to appeal any areas deemed ineligible for grant aid to the Agricultural Appeals Office. You can only claim grant aid for the area covered by the financial approval.

Should you have any queries regarding this matter, you may contact us by phone at 053 9163425 or by email forestryappenq@agriculture.gov.ie

Yours sincerely,

Martina Monaghan
Forest Service

Appendix 2: OPT in & Declaration by Applicant

OPT IN & DECLARATION - AFFORESTATION

DECLARATION BY APPLICANT

Contract Number:

I/We _____ hereby accept the revised terms of the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 and request that my technical approval under the former Scheme be processed to financial approval under the terms and conditions of the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027.

I wish to change my application as follows:

Plot number	Approved GPC	Proposed Forest Type

Applicants Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Name(s) in BlockCapitals _____

Appendix 3: Environmental Declaration by Forester

CONTRACT NUMBER:

Aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected by the afforestation project

Considering:

- a. the characteristics of the project, as previously submitted and taking into account the above changes from GPCs to the new Forest Types available under the new Afforestation Scheme;
- b. the location of the project in relation to environmental sensitivities such as water, biodiversity, archaeology, landscape and adjoining and nearby roads, dwellings and local amenities; and
- c. the types and characteristics of potential impacts that might arise;

- 1. To the best of your knowledge, are any significant effects on the environment expected to result from this project? YES / NO**
- 2. To the best of your knowledge, are any residues, emissions or waste expected to arise from this project? YES / NO**

If 'YES' to either or both questions, please provide a brief description below:

Signed _____

Date _____