

14th February, 2024.

Circular 2/2024

To all Registered Foresters

Change to Section within ‘*Environmental requirements for afforestation*’

Please note the following revision of the ‘Other biodiversity considerations’ section on page 13 of the *Environmental Requirements for Afforestation* (v.31Aug23). This revised text replaces that section in its entirety and is introduced with immediate effect. This change will be included in the next published version of the Environment Requirements document.

Other biodiversity considerations

Other biodiversity issues can arise that are not directly addressed by the Environmental Considerations and that may, in some cases, require a specific report. For example:

- If applications are within the range of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and a field assessment identifies that an area may be potential habitat, a survey for Marsh Fritillary is required. Potential habitat is indicated by the presence of Devil’s Bit Scabious between ankle and knee height. If larval webs are found, the area is excluded from the application.
- If applications are within the range of the Kerry Slug (sandstone geology in West Cork or Kerry) and a field assessment identifies that an area may be potential habitat, a survey for Kerry slug is required. If the species is found to be present, a derogation licence from NPWS will be required.
- If applications contain old buildings or underground places such as souterrains, caves and mines, they may be potential bat habitats. This should be considered and incorporated into the project design. Other features within applications that may be utilised by bats, either as roosting, foraging or for commuting, include existing mature trees, areas of scrub, hedgerows, and aquatic zones and their associated setbacks. The Afforestation Scheme includes provisions to retain/enhance these features, and this will also prove beneficial to bats. The design of the proposed afforestation project should look to increase connectivity within the project area, where possible e.g. linkage of open areas both within the project area itself and to areas outside, or enhanced setbacks along hedgerows.
- In relation to aquatic habitats and aquatic species, or species that depend on aquatic habitats (some of which may be protected under Annex II or Annex IV of the Habitats

Directive), measures to protect water quality will also provide protection to these species and habitats. As such, a specific ecology report is not required to be submitted with the application.

- If there is a population of a species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order 2022 (S.I. of 2022) known to be present within the application, then an Ecology survey may be required. See the NPWS Flora Protection Order (FPO) Map Viewer for more information ([Maps and Data | National Parks & Wildlife Service \(npws.ie\)](https://npws.ie/Maps-and-Data))

Joanne Adams

Asst. Principal Officer
Forestry Division