

Forest Service Ecologist reply

For District Inspector/Admin

To:	Approval Section, Wexford <u>OR</u> Felling Section, Wexford	Felling Section
From:	Forest Service Ecologist	Katharine Duff
File/ Ref Number:	TFL00039917	
Townland	Taughmaconnell	
County	Roscommon	
Applicant		
Date	23rd September 2019	

To Approval Section / Felling Section: Please forward this cover letter and the attached report & maps (if any) to the relevant District Inspector, for consideration in his assessment of this application.	Charles Fahy
---	--------------

1. Reason for referral – reference to Protected Habitats & Species Table in FS Afforestation Requirements:

Protected habitat and / or species scenario(s) that apply (from Table 2, Environmental Requirements for Afforestation):	Tick ✓ (where relevant)
1. Plot(s) within a SAC, SPA, NHA or pNHA, a Nature Reserve, a National Park, or a Refuge for Flora and Fauna.	
2. In non-designated area, but a habitat listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive is known to be present or observed within the plot(s).	
3. Plot(s) is within one of the Top 8 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FPM) Catchments.	
4. Plot(s) is within the 6 km zone of a non-Top 8 FPM Catchment.	
5. An Annex IV species or its habitat (if in the species range) is known to be present or observed within the plot(s).	
6. An Annex II species and / or its habitat is known to be present or observed within the plot(s).	
7. The application is located on sandstone geology in West Cork or Kerry, as illustrated in Figure 1 of the Forest Service <i>Forestry & Kerry Slug Guidelines</i> .	
8. There a population of a species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order 2015 (S.I.356 of 2015) known to be present or observed within the plot(s).	
9. Other (.....) Felling site is within a Curlew breeding buffer area	✓

Confirm that Inspector has already visited site Yes/No	yes
--	-----

2. TFL00039917 Background to file

Ballydangan Bog is an undesignated raised bog on which 8 breeding pairs of Curlew have been recorded (NPWS data). The 5.5ha. conifer plantation which is proposed for clearfell is located on the northern edge of this Bog. A site visit was undertaken on 11th July 2019 by the Forest Service Ecologist K. Duff, District Inspector Charles Fahy and the applicant, to assess the habitats and site conditions to determine an appropriate future management plan post-clearfelling, that takes into consideration the conservation status of breeding curlew on the adjacent Ballydangan Bog. Habitat classification follows (Fossitt (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland).

Conifer plantation (WD4)

The plantation is pure Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), 30yrs old with a closed canopy. There is virtually no ground flora except occasional moss (*hypnum jutlandicum*) growing through a carpet of pine needles. There is a network of old mound drains (c0.5m wide x 0.5m deep) dug every 12m and oriented in an east to west direction across the plantation and sloping down towards the edge of the bog. Peat depth is more than 3m. The surface of the peat is cracked in places and dry.

Scrub (WS1)

At the northern end of the plantation there is some regenerating scrub where conifers were cleared in the past few years. Young Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Lodgepole pine saplings are abundant. Also occurring are Fireweed (*Chamaeneron angustifolium*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and occasional Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*).

Drainage ditch (FW4)

There is a drainage ditch along the eastern boundary of the plantation adjacent to the adjoining raised bog habitat (and which is in separate ownership). The ditch is c. 0.5m wide x 1m deep. Although dry at time of site visit, it flows during winter months (ref. applicant).

Cutover bog (PB4)

At the northern of the site there is an area of bare peat, where cutting of turf is on-going. There is a peat face c. 2-3m high at the edge of the high bog.

Raised Bog (PB2)

The vegetation of the raised bog 30m east of the plantation is typical of this habitat and includes among other species; Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Cotton (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), and Sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum spp.*) With a cover of c. 20%.

3. TFL00039917 Recommendations

It will not be possible to restore this conifer plantation site to raised bog habitat, due to the alteration of the habitat associated with the mound drains and conifer plantation over 30 years. What is probably most important in relation to Curlew is to ensure that conifers do not recolonise on the clearfelled site.

The following is recommended:

- Reforestation objective is BIO, based on NWS Scenario 5 (Pioneer Birch Woodland)
- Allow native woodland development dominated by birch which will naturally regenerate anyway.

- Control the regrowth of Lodgepole pine saplings for 3-4 years or until they all are removed.
- As the mound drains are dry and full of pine needles, drain blocking is not proposed.
- A meeting with The Ballydangan Bog Restoration Project and National Parks & Wildlife is proposed to discuss future management in relation to Curlew conservation. Pending the outcome of the meeting, this may result in the replanting requirement to be waived.

