

# **Frequently Asked Questions**

## **Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027**



**Version 2: 12 November 2024**

## Contents

1. When did the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 open for new applications? .....	4
2. How do I make an application? .....	4
3. How does the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 differ to the scheme offered in the Forestry Programme 2014-2020? .....	4
4. I have a valid Afforestation Licence and would like to plant now, what do I need to do? 5	
5. I have a valid Afforestation Scheme approval and commenced work in 2022. What payment rates will apply? .....	6
6. Where are the terms and conditions for the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027? .....	6
7. What is the definition of a farmer?.....	7
8. How can new or young farmers qualify? .....	7
9. What payment rates will be offered for the Afforestation and Scheme 2023-2027?...8	
10. Can Afforestation approvals for GPC 1 be changed to a Forest Type (FT)? .....	11
11. Can I apply for the Native Tree Area Scheme now? .....	11
12. Previously it was permissible to plant 5% broadleaves in a block and 10% broadleaves throughout the conifers. Under the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 can I now plant 10% broadleaves in a block and 10% broadleaves throughout the conifers? .....	11
13. Are all the Scenarios 1 – 6 IN (FT1) Native Forest, now 2,500 stems/ ha? .....	11
14. Are farmers who enter the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 entitled to Basic Support Payments? .....	11
15. When will farmer qualification be confirmed and can this be done before planting commences?.....	11
16. Once farmer definition is confirmed at Form 2 payment stage, does it last for the duration of the contract? .....	11
17. If my Afforestation licence expires soon can it be extended? .....	11
18. Can the Ornithological reports be carried out at all times of the year?.....	12
19. Will the FT for Emergent woodland applications be accepted in Hen Harrier SPA's? 12	
20. Will pre-screening and Ornithological Report's be eligible for Environmental Report Grant? .....	12
21. How do the new programme requirements impact existing in-system pre-approval afforestation applications? .....	12
22. Will guidance be provided in relation to the identification and classification of organo mineral soils?.....	12
23. Are premium payments for afforested land paid to landowners under the De Minimis Scheme or the Afforestation Scheme? .....	12

24. Do the answers provided in respect of environmental considerations questions for afforestation pre-approval application remove the requirement to supply Natural Impact Statements (NISs) in respect of afforestation applications or for remove the requirement for DAFM to produce Appropriate Assessment Determinations (AADs)? .....	13
25. What financial supports are provided to landowners and registered foresters in respect of the new field survey requirements, mapping and ecological report requirements in respect of pre-approval afforestation applications submitted under the new afforestation scheme? .....	13
26. What is the minimum broadleaf requirement for Forest Type 10 or FT10? .....	13
27. What financial supports are available for fencing the broadleaf component of FT11 and FT12 plots? .....	13
28. What is the support email for iNET in regards to submitting online applications? .....	14
29. Are the spatial layers required to answer the scheme questions related to Environmental Considerations for afforestation available to view in the iNET online application system for registered foresters? .....	14
30. What is the minimum broadleaf requirement for Forest Type 12 or FT12? .....	14
31. What support is available to protect the 20% broadleaves on a FT12 site from Deer damage? .....	14
Appendix 1 – Afforestation Declaration for licence holders .....	15

The Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 opened for applications in September 2023. This scheme differs in some ways from the previous scheme (Afforestation Scheme 2014-2020, extended to 2022), and this has some implications for applicants who hold a valid afforestation licence, applicants who have submitted an application but not yet received a decision and new applicants. These FAQs have been compiled to give guidance to all applicants.

**1. When did the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 open for new applications?**

The Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 opened for new applications on the 06<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.

**2. How do I make an application?**

You will need to work with a Registered Forester to submit an application on your behalf. The Department maintains a list of Registered Foresters which is available at:

[List of registered foresters](#)

**3. How does the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 differ to the scheme offered in the Forestry Programme 2014-2020?**

- Payment rates have increased significantly with premiums for planting trees increasing by between 46% and 66%.
- A new 20-year premium term is offered exclusively for farmers.
- Agroforestry premiums have doubled in duration from 5 to 10 years.
- Forest Types (FTs) have replaced Grant and Premium Categories (GPCs) and new Forest Types can be selected including Forests for Water, Neighbourwoods, Emergent Forests and Continuous Cover Forestry.
- A Habitat description and map now qualifies for payment of the Environment Report and associated grant.
- A 20% broadleaf species component is now mandatory for all mixed forest types, including FT12.
- Certain areas of the country may no longer be eligible for grant aid due to more stringent conditions regarding High Nature Value farmland, peat soils, breeding wader bird species, and freshwater pearl mussel.

**4. I have a valid Afforestation Licence and would like to plant now, what do I need to do?**

We wrote to all licence holders in September 2023 with information on what to do if you wish to plant. If you would like this letter to be sent to you again, please contact [Approvals.ForestService@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:Approvals.ForestService@agriculture.gov.ie)

If you wish to plant, you will need to opt into the terms and conditions of the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 and receive written opt in approval first (see Appendix 1). Please note that you may receive a full approval, a partial approval or a refusal to opt into the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027.

Once you have received your full or partial opt in approval, your registered forester will need to submit a Form 1a for financial approval on your behalf. You may only apply for financial aid for the area approved in your opt in approval letter.

One of the changes made to the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 is that the Grant and Premium Categories (GPCs) that you were approved for will not be offered and have been replaced by Forest Types (FTs). Table 1 below lists the corresponding FTs and in your declaration, we will require you to confirm which FT you will now plant.

**Table 1 – GPCs and FTs**

<b>If you have approval for the following GPC for one or more forest plots:</b>	<b>You may change to the following Forest Type (FT) in relation to those same forest plots:</b>
GPC 1 - Unenclosed	N/A – GPC 1 will no longer be offered as a grant aided forest; you will need to remove any GPC 1 plots from your application before you submit your Form 1a
GPC 2 - Sitka spruce/lodgepole pine	N/A - new application required for FT12
GPC 3 - 15% Diverse mix	FT12 - Mixed high forests with mainly spruce, 20% broadleaves
GPC 4 - Diverse	FT11 - Mixed high forests: Conifer, 20% broadleaves
GPC 5 - Broadleaf (except oak & beech)	FT7 - Other Broadleaf
GPC 6 - Oak	FT6 - Broadleaf, mainly oak
GPC 7 - Beech	FT7 - Other Broadleaf
GPC 8 - Alder	FT7 - Other Broadleaf

<b>If you have approval for the following GPC for one or more forest plots:</b>	<b>You may change to the following Forest Type (FT) in relation to those same forest plots:</b>
GPC 9 - NWS Est (Scenarios 1-3)	FT1 - Native forests
GPC 10 - NWS Est (Scenario 4)	FT1 - Native forests
GPC 11 - Agroforestry	FT8 - Agroforestry
GPC 12 - Forestry for Fibre	N/A - GPC 12 will no longer be offered as a grant aided forest, you will need to remove any GPC 12 plots from your application before you submit your Form 1a
Scheme - Creation of Woodlands on Public Lands	FT3 – Forest Creation on Public Lands

It will not be possible for you to change to the following new Forest Types. If you would like to plant any of these FTs your Registered Forester will need to submit a new afforestation application on your behalf.

FT2	Forests for water
FT4	NeighbourWoods
FT5	Emergent Forests
FT9	Seed Orchards
FT10	CCF

Please note that Creation of Woodland on Public Lands Scheme has been replaced by FT3 in the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 and applicants who would like to use their valid approval will also need to follow the process outlined above.

**5. I have a valid Afforestation Scheme approval and commenced work in 2022. What payment rates apply?**

Your Registered Forester can submit a Form 2 for any work that commenced up to and including 31/12/2022 and it will be paid at the Forestry Programme 2014-2020 (extended to end 2022) rates. This also applies in cases where the work commenced in 2022 but may have been completed in 2023. This applies to all Forestry Schemes.

**6. Where are the terms and conditions for the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027?**

The terms and conditions for the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 are available in the Scheme document on the DAFM website at [gov.ie - Afforestation Scheme](http://gov.ie - Afforestation Scheme)

Technical documents referred to in the Scheme document can be found at [gov.ie - Regulation, Forest Health and Resources \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie - Regulation, Forest Health and Resources (www.gov.ie))

## **7. What is the definition of a farmer?**

Forests established and maintained in accordance with the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 will be eligible for the payment of an annual premium for a period of up to 20 years for farmers and 15 years for non farmers.

Applicants that can pass the Departments Active Farmer check and that have submitted a valid application for the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme in the application year (calendar year the planting was completed) and that were also a member of either BISS or the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) in the previous 4 years will be considered a farmer for this scheme. All other applicants will be deemed to be non-farmers for the purposes of this scheme.

'Active Farmer' means the applicant claiming payments on the land must be the applicant farming and/or managing the land, that is, the Active Farmer. The farming activities can include meeting a minimum stocking rate (0.10 livestock unit per forage hectare), producing crops, cutting hay/silage, maintaining landscape features. See BISS terms and conditions for further information.

Further information can be found in the Farmer Definition FAQs which are available on the DAFM website at [gov.ie - Afforestation Scheme](http://gov.ie - Afforestation Scheme)

## **8. How can new or young farmers qualify?**

New and young farmers who do not meet the criteria to be an approved member of Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme in the application year and a member of either BISS or Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) in the previous 4 years, will only need to be in BISS or BPS from the year they were approved members of either the Young Farmer schemes or the National Reserve for new and young farmer schemes until the year of their afforestation application.

9. What payment rates will be offered for the Afforestation and Scheme 2023-2027?

	Forest Type	Grant /ha	Annual Premium/ha	Duration of Premiums for farmers	Duration of Premiums for non-farmers
FT1	Native forests	€6,744	€1,103	20	15
FT2	Forests for water*	€6,744	€1,142	20	15
FT3	Forests on Public Lands**	€10,544	€1,103	15	n/a
FT4	NeighbourWoods***	€10,200	€1,142	20	15
FT5	Emergent Forest	€2,500	€350	20	15
FT6	Broadleaf, mainly oak and beech	€6,744	€1,037	20	15
FT7	Diverse Broadleaf	€4,314	€973	20	15
FT8	Agroforestry	€8,555	€975	10	10
FT9	Seed Orchards	€10,000	€1,142	20	15
FT10	Continuous Cover Forestry	€5,421	€912	20	15
FT11	Mixed high forests: Conifer, 20% broadleaves	€4,452	€863	20	15
FT12	Mixed high forests with mainly spruce, 20% broadleaves	€3,858	€746	20	15

\* Additional payment of €1,000 per ha will be paid to landowner on completion of planting

\*\* Grant includes support for appropriate recreational facilities

\*\*\* Grant includes support for appropriate recreational facilities

## **Environment report and associated grant**

The aims of the environment report and associated grant are: (i) to increase the quality of afforestation applications, particularly in relation to potential environmental sensitivities; (ii), to increase the throughput of applications by DAFM; and (iii) to ensure applicants and their agents are reasonably reimbursed for the additional costs associated with the required standard and scope of the environmental reports submitted.

Environmental reports that are eligible for this grant may include:

- A Pre-Screening Report
- A Habitat Description and Map
- An Ecology Report covering non-Appropriate Assessment ecology requirements
- A Natura Impact Statement.
- Archaeology Impact Assessment
- Archaeology Monitoring Report

Other reports, such as bird surveys, botanical surveys, water and landscape-related assessments and Environmental Impact Assessment Reports may also be required and are also eligible.

## **Grant rate**

€450 per hectare for first hectare

€400 for second ha

€350 for third ha

€50 per ha for subsequent hectares to a maximum of 20 hectares

## Fencing Rates

Fence Type	€ per metre (IS436 rates)	€ per metre (non IS436 Rates)	IS436 (160m/ ha cap)	Non IS436 (120m/ha cap)
Stock	5.50	4.50	Max €880/ha at forest level	Max €540/ha at forest level
Stock/ Sheep	7.00	5.00		
Stock/ Rabbit	7.00	6.50		
Upgrade to deer	9.00	8.00	€1,440/ha	€960/ha
Deer	18.00	14.00	All deer fencing must be approved in advance. Only sites where at least 70% of the area enclosed by the deer fence of FT 1 to 11 is eligible.	
Deer/ Rabbit	18.00 New Deer fencing capped at €2,880/ha	14.00 New Deer fencing capped at €2,100/ha		

The maximum metres of fencing funded will be based on the total lengths of new fences erected to Forest Service specifications and based on the area of the forest multiplied by 160 metres, where IS436 is used exclusively, irrespective of fence type erected. Maximum fencing cap of €50,000 per forest. Where non IS436 deer fencing is used a cap of 150 metres per ha will apply to the deer fencing element and capped at €2,100 per ha.

**10. Can Afforestation approvals for GPC 1 be changed to a Forest Type (FT)?**

No, areas of GPC1 will need to be excluded. The land proposed for planting will need to meet soil type(s) eligible for afforestation under the new Forestry Programme and meet the required R + N score of 6.0 or above. More information can be found in the Land Types for Afforestation document which can be found at [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - Regulation, Forest Health and Resources can be found at [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - Regulation, Forest Health and Resources ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

**11. Can I apply for the Native Tree Area Scheme now?**

The Native Tree Area Scheme opened for applications on the 04<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Full details on the new scheme are available on the Department's website at [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - [Native Tree Area Scheme](http://Native Tree Area Scheme)

**12. Previously it was permissible to plant 5% broadleaves in a block and 10% broadleaves throughout the conifers. Under the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 can I now plant 10% broadleaves in a block and 10% broadleaves throughout the conifers?**

Yes. The location of broadleaves should complement the individual site. This is normally done by planting the broadleaves near setbacks from water courses, dwelling houses, public roads, hedgerows, archaeological monuments and other features. It may also include groups planted through the conifers.

**13. Are all the Scenarios 1 – 6 IN (FT1) Native Forest, now 2,500 stems/ ha?**

Yes, all scenarios in FT1 Native Forest are now 2500 stems per ha.

**14. Are farmers who enter the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 entitled to Basic Support Payments?**

Subject to meeting the terms and conditions of the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) landowners who enter the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 will be entitled to BISS.

**15. When will farmer qualification be confirmed and can this be done before planting commences?**

Farmer qualification will be confirmed at Form 2 payment stage.

**16. Once farmer definition is confirmed at Form 2 payment stage, does it last for the duration of the contract?**

Once a farmer qualifies as a farmer at Form 2 payment stage then farmer status is in place for the 20 years of that contract. If the land changes ownership during that 20 years then Change of Ownership procedures will need to be adhered to.

For more information please see [gov.ie](http://gov.ie) - Forestry Grant Scheme - Change of Ownership ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))

**17. If my Afforestation licence expires soon, can it be extended?**

It may be possible to issue an extension, but only if the licence has not yet expired. Please contact the Approvals Section of the Forestry Division on 053-9163400 or at

[Approvals.ForestService@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:Approvals.ForestService@agriculture.gov.ie) with your contract number if you wish to apply for an extension.

**18. Can the Ornithological reports be carried out at all times of the year?**

The bird related protocols and procedures to apply will depend on the location of the proposed project and the bird species of concern.

**19. Will the FT for Emergent woodland applications be accepted in Hen Harrier SPA's?**

There will be no new afforestation approved in any SPA.

**20. Will pre-screening and Ornithological Report's be eligible for Environmental Report Grant?**

Yes, ecology and archaeology reports are eligible for the Environmental Report Grant (ERG). Environmental reports that are eligible for this grant may include A Pre-Screening Report, A Habitat Description and Map, An Ecology Report covering non-Appropriate Assessment ecology requirements, A Natura Impact Statement, Archaeology Impact Assessment and Archaeology Monitoring Report. See also Appendix 1 of the Forestry Standards Manual.

**21. How do the new programme requirements impact existing in-system pre-approval afforestation applications?**

Afforestation applications submitted prior to September 2023 will be assessed to align with environmental legislation, in particular Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 191 2017 (which transposes Annex IIA of the EIA Directive), and with the State Aid conditions underpinning the new Forestry Programme. The work in relation to any additional field or other assessments of these files will be predominantly conducted by DAFM forestry inspectors and ecologists.

**22. Will guidance be provided in relation to the identification and classification of organo mineral soils?**

Yes, there is guidance in appendix A of the Land Types for afforestation Soil and Fertility document. This covers both soil survey for organo mineral soils and soil survey and identification of modified fens and modified cutaway raised bogs. Field training has been organised by DAFM on a regional basis which included the survey protocols for organo-mineral soils.

**23. Are premium payments for afforested land paid to landowners under the De Minimis Scheme or the Afforestation Scheme?**

The De Minimis Scheme is no longer in operation (see also Circular 10 of 2023 Closure of Interim Afforestation Scheme (via General De Minimis)). Premium payments will be paid (20 years for farmers and 15 years for non-farmers) for all newly planted lands meeting the required standards under the new afforestation scheme.

**24. Do the answers provided in respect of environmental considerations questions for afforestation pre-approval application remove the requirement to supply Natural Impact Statements (NISs) in respect of afforestation applications or for remove the requirement for DAFM to produce Appropriate Assessment Determinations (AADs)?**

The purpose of the Environmental Considerations section is to fully align the assessment process with the environmental legislation, in particular Schedule 1 of S.I. No. 191 2017 (which transposes Annex IIA of the EIA Directive), and with the State Aid conditions underpinning the new Forestry Programme. They also serve to structure the various checks Registered Foresters are required to undertake in relation to these key sensitivities. The requirement for DAFM to carry out Appropriate Assessment is related to the potential environmental impacts of a project on the qualifying interests of European Sites proximate to the proposed afforestation site. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive sets out the requirement for Appropriate Assessment in relation to SACs and SPAs or European Sites. Appropriate Assessment Screening and Appropriate Assessment is an ongoing legal requirement for all afforestation applications submitted to DAFM. See also Circular 02 of 2020 Appropriate Assessment Procedures which sets out the requirements and circumstances where NISs are required in support of afforestation projects.

**25. What financial supports are provided to landowners and registered foresters in respect of the new field survey requirements, mapping and ecological report requirements in respect of pre-approval afforestation applications submitted under the new afforestation scheme?**

Afforestation projects can now avail of the significantly increased grants and the Environmental Report Grant to help offset the costs of environmental reports incurred as part of the application process (e.g. habitat report, archaeology report). See Annex 1 of the Afforestation Scheme Document for information related to the Environmental Report Grant Payments.

**26. What is the minimum broadleaf requirement for Forest Type 10 or FT10?**

The minimum broadleaf component for FT10 is 20% of planted area. See also Appendix 1 of the Forestry Standards Manual.

**27. What financial supports are available for fencing the broadleaf component of FT11 and FT12 plots?**

The maximum metres of fencing funded will be based on the total lengths of new fences erected to Forest Service specifications and based on the area of the forest multiplied by 160 metres, where IS436 is used exclusively, irrespective of fence type erected. Maximum fencing cap of €50,000 per forest. Where non IS436 deer fencing is used a cap of 150 metres per ha will apply to the deer fencing element and the rate is capped at €2,100 per/ha. Sites where at least 70% of the area enclosed by the deer fence for FT1 - FT11 are eligible for deer fence funding. Deer fencing must be approved in advance i.e. at the pre-approval stage. FT11 and FT12 plots will also be eligible for the Deer Tree Shelter, Hare and Deer Fencing Scheme.

**What is the support email for iNET in regards to submitting online applications?**

For support queries related to iNET online applications please contact: 049 4368288 or email [forestryonline@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:forestryonline@agriculture.gov.ie) and a support ticket will be raised (where appropriate) to address any iNET system technical issues encountered.

**28. Are the spatial layers required to answer the scheme questions related to Environmental Considerations for afforestation available to view in the iNET online application system for registered foresters?**

Spatial layers relevant to the assessment of Environmental Considerations are currently available from the iFORIS and iNET map viewer test systems. These are now available in the iNET map viewer.

**29. What is the minimum broadleaf requirement for Forest Type 12 or FT12?**

This forest type is comprised of a plot Sitka spruce plus a minimum 20% broadleaves by area. The broadleaf content must be at least 20% of area planted. See also Appendix 1 of the Forestry Standards Manual.

**30. What support is available to protect the 20% broadleaves on a FT12 site from Deer damage?**

An applicant can apply for support at the Afforestation approval stage for the Deer Tree Shelter (DTS), Hare and Deer Fencing Scheme. The support for protecting the 20% ADB is €625ha. For example: a 10ha plot of FT12 will have a minimum of 2ha ADB planted at 4m x 4m spacing. The maximum claimed area at Form 2 for the DTS scheme will be 10ha and be eligible to receive a grant of €6,250.

## Appendix 1 – Afforestation Declaration for licence holders

### AFFORESTATION SCHEME 2023-2027

#### OPT IN & DECLARATION BY APPLICANT

Contract Number: CN

FO Number:

I/We \_\_\_\_\_

hereby accept the revised terms of the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 and request that my application for an afforestation licence and technical approval under the terms and conditions of former Afforestation Scheme be transferred to an application under the terms and conditions of the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027.

I wish to change my application as follows:

Plot number	GPC	Proposed Forest Type

Applicant(s) signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) in Block Capitals \_\_\_\_\_