An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Forestry Licensing Plan 2022

Quarter 1 Update

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine committed to issue a quarterly update indicating progress to provide ongoing clarity on the licensing plan and to allow monitoring on the delivery of the various key performance indicators (KPIs). This is the update for Q1 (1 Jan 2022 – 31 March 2022). The Department's Forestry Licensing Plan published earlier this year committed to key targets of:

- The licensing plan contains a target of 5,250 licences issues, which is a year-on-year increase of 30%.
- A higher priority will be given to afforestation licences for 2022 with a 107% increase in output up to 1,040.
- There will be a year-on-year increase of 48% of private felling, roads and afforestation files. Coillte felling licences will maintain the levels they achieved in 2021.
- The Department will also refocus on the delivery of most approvals from several schemes including Reconstitution and Underplanting Scheme (RUS) (Ash Dieback), the Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme (Frost) and the Native Woodland Scheme.

TABLE 1: 2021 LICENCE OUTPUT AND 2022 PLANNED LICENSING DELIVERY

Licence area	Received 2021	Issued 2021	Estimate to be received 2022	Projected to issue in 2022	% increase in licences issued 2021 vs. 2022
Coillte felling	2,299	1,532	1,200	1,530	0%
Private felling	1,302	1,345	1,400	1,830	36%
Roads	645	671	650	850	27%
Afforestation	476	502	500	1,040	107%
Total	**4,722**	**4,050**	**3,750**	**5,250**	**30%**

Summary of Quarter 1 2022 output and KPIs

1. A total of 1,307 new forestry licences issued in Q1. This is 99.6% of the target set in the plan for Q1 (1,312 licences).
2. The average weekly output increased to over 100 per week in the first quarter of 2022, compared to 78 last year.
3. The number of applications on hand for processing has dropped from 4,801 to 3,862 in Q1 which is a net gain of 939.
4. Application on hand has been reduced to 3,862 from 6,100 in August 2021.
5. 1,307 licences were issued and there were 621 new applications received in Q1, comprising (98 afforestation, 354 felling and 169 roads).
6. In relation to afforestation, the quarterly licensing output for the first quarter of 2022 is 165 licences, the Department has recently recruited a number of external ecologists who are focusing exclusively on afforestation to increase output further to meet the target for afforestation licences as set out in the Licensing Plan. These improved outputs are expected to come through in Q2.
7. In relation to felling, Coillte Felling licensing for the first quarter of 2022 is ahead of target and private felling licences are slightly behind; the Department has reassigned some staff to improve the output of private felling licences to meet annual target.
8. The number of licences on hand for processing for more than 120 days continues to decline and is now 3,200, down from 3,700 at the start of Q1.

Table 2: Quarter 1 2022 licence output

Licence area	Q1 2021 Output	Target Q1 2022	Q1 2022 Output
Coillte felling	383	383	568
Private felling	336	458	373
Roads	168	213	201
Afforestation	126	260	165
Total	**1,012**	**1,312**	**1,307**

Figure 1: Quarter 1 2022 Licence output

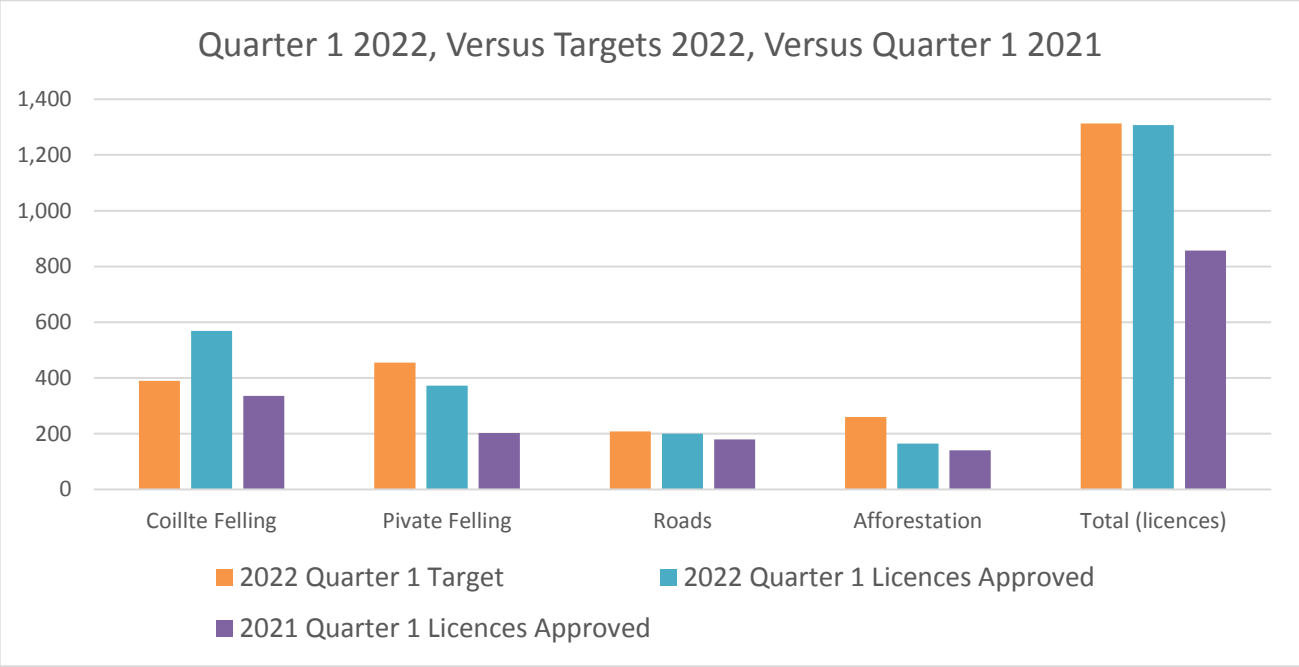
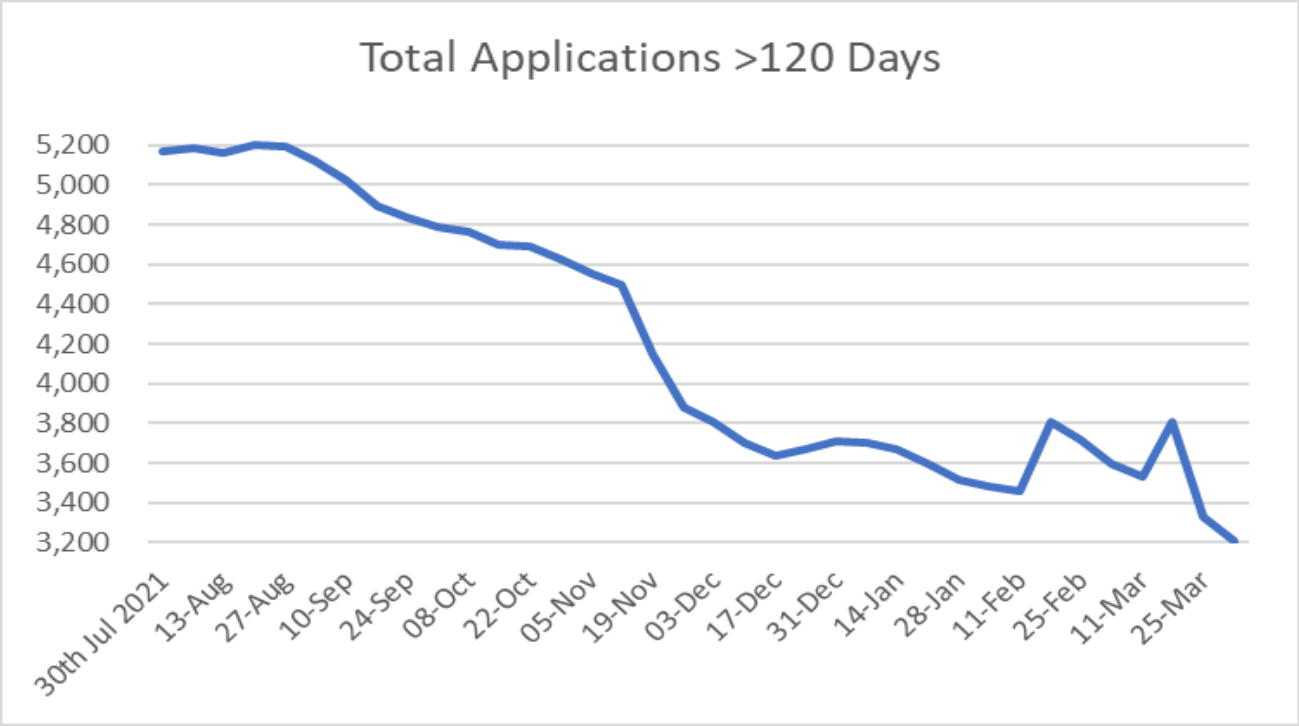


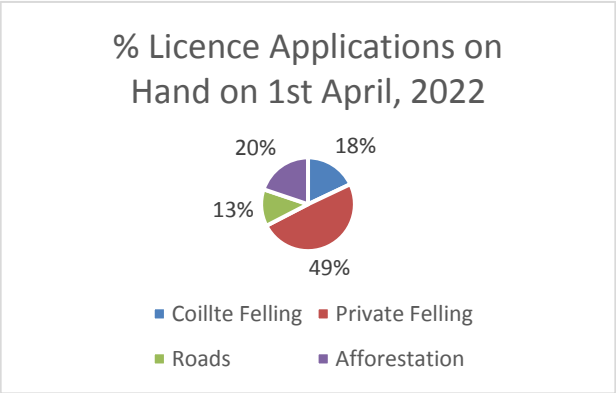
Figure 2: Total applications to be processed greater than 120 days



The number of applications with the Department over 120 days - can be seen in **Figure 2** above which has decreased to 3,200 applications by the end of March. The Department has now brought in a policy on time-bound further information requests (FIRs). This will bring it in line with other planning authorities to ensure efficient use of resources. Files with outstanding FIRs over a set time will be removed from the licensing worklist. Reminders will always be sent to applicants to make them aware of the situation with their file.

Table 4: Breakdown of total licences with the Department on 1st April 2022

Type of Licence	Number
Felling Coillte	724
Felling Private	1,891
Roads	488
Afforestation	759
Total	**3,862**



At the end of Quarter 1 2022, the Department had 3,862 licence applications on hand. Since 1st January, this figure has reduced from 4,803 and from 6,100 in August 2021. This is significant progress and indicates that output is exceeding output i.e. the number of licences issued in Q1 was 1,307 and the number of applications received was 621.

In addition, to licensing output priorities for 2022, the Department continue to undertake a data cleaning exercise on our licensing application system to ensure that only valid applications are on hand for processing.

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Delivery of Licensing Priorities in Quarter 1 2022

Licensing priority 1: Increase output of licences

Target	Output Q1 2022
Continue to reduce the figure of licences on hand by issuing significantly more licences on average each week than received	1,307 licences were issued and there were 621 applications received in Q1, comprising 90 afforestation, 176 felling and 109 roads.
Issue on average more than 100 licences per week for 2022	100 licences issued on average every week in Quarter 1, compared to 78 per week in 2021
Remove all felling licences predating 2021 by end of the second quarter	On target to have no private felling files predating 2021 outstanding by Q2 apart from those where Further Information was sought from the applicant.
Reduce the average Turnaround Times (TATs) for licencing applications. The TAT is calculated as the number of days it takes from the date the application is first advertised to date of decision issued.	For 2022 Q1 TAT: 14.2 months for afforestation, 14.8 months for felling and 10.6 months for roads. Note: Many older files are currently screened in and referred to Ecology. With increased ecology resources working on these older files, proportionately more files will be processed from this cohort than screen out files that have a short TAT. Therefore, the TAT will increase in the medium term before it reduces.

Licensing priority 2: Greater focus on Afforestation

Target	Output Q1 2022
Ensure a different balance of licences to afford higher priority to afforestation	There were 13 afforestation files issued per week in Quarter 1 2022 compared to 10/ week 2021. Additional ecology resources with a focus of afforestation are in place, which will show increased output next quarter.
Maintain the ongoing approach to screening of files, appropriate reallocation and the recruitment of administrative, forestry inspector and ecology resources to focus on afforestation, while also applying the systems used elsewhere to streamline the process.	Additional resource secured for ecology; engineer; inspector and admin grades.

Licensing Priority 3: Improving quality of forestry applications

Target	Output Q1 2022
Deliver ecology-led training for professional foresters to facilitate the submission of habitat maps to accompany applications in agreed circumstances.	The Department has arranged two targeted training for registered foresters on biodiversity and habitat maps to help improve the quality of forestry applications.
Deliver a wider communication strategy beyond foresters, ecologists and applicants to increase awareness of, and confidence in, the processes and systems used by the Department.	Communications plan agreed in Project Woodland.
implement a pilot pre-application discussion and an updated grant for applicants.	Launched and well underway, recently extended to include six districts.

Licensing Priority 4: Delivery on other scheme approvals

Target	Output Q1 2022
Reconstitution and Underplanting Scheme (Ash Dieback) (RUS)	Ongoing. Seeking harvest plans and continued ongoing positive engagement with Department of Housing on removing planning requirement. There are currently 593 applications on hand for a total of 2,402ha. 189 approvals have issued for this scheme for a total of 620ha.
Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme (Frost)	Closing date May 2022 with approvals expected to commence in Quarter 2.
The Native Woodland Conservation Scheme	An additional 7 NWS Conservation schemes approved in Quarter 1. The Scheme added to dashboard and additional Ecology Resource allocated.
Small-Scale tree planting	Legislation to provide was enacted on 4th April date after the passing of the Fur Farming and Forestry Provisions Act with Forestry Act amendment. A scheme to give effect to this is currently under preparation for consultation.

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