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

Forestry Licensing Plan 2022

Quarter 2 Update

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) 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 Q2 (1 April – 30th June 2022). The DAFM Forestry Licensing Plan published earlier this year committed to key targets of:

SUMMARY OF QUARTER 2 2022 OUTPUT AND KPIS

1. **1,141** new forestry licences issued in Q2. This is 87% of the target set in the plan for Q2 (1,313 licences) Licencing output YTD at 2448 is 97% of the targets set in the Plan.
2. The number of applications on hand for processing has dropped from 4,801 at the end of 2021 to **3,148** in Q2 which is a net reduction of 1,653.
3. **499** new applications received in Q2, comprising (115 afforestation, 219 felling and 165 roads).
4. In relation to afforestation, the quarterly licensing output for the second quarter of 2022 is **131** licences, DAFM has 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 Licencing Plan. These improved outputs are expected to come through in Q3.
5. In relation to felling, overall felling licence output YTD is ahead of target (1,744 licences issued vs. 1,690 target). In Q2 the difference between Coillte Felling licences and private felling licences narrowed compared to Q1. This is due to a reassignment of Department forestry Inspectorate and ecology staff to private felling which was evident in the higher private felling licence output in June.
6. Output of road licences remains consistent in Q2 and YTD is at 98% of the output target.
7. The number of licences on hand for processing for more than 120 days continues to decline and is now **2,573**, down from 3,700 at the start of Q1.

TABLE 1: QUARTER 2 2022 LICENCE OUTPUT

Licence area	Q2 2021 Output	Target Q2 2022 (from week beginning 4th April i.e. 13 weeks)	Q2 2022 Output
Coillte felling	197	390	432
Private felling	376	455	371
Roads	182	208	207
Afforestation	160	260	131
Total	**915**	**1,313**	**1,141**

TABLE 2: SIX MONTH 2022 LICENCE OUTPUT

Licence area	H1 2021 Output	Target H1 2022 (based on half the yearly weekly targets).	H1 2022 Output
Coillte felling	580	910	1,000
Private felling	712	780	744
Roads	350	416	408
Afforestation	286	520	296
Total	**1,928**	**2,526**	**2,448**

Figure 1: Quarter 2 2022 Licence output

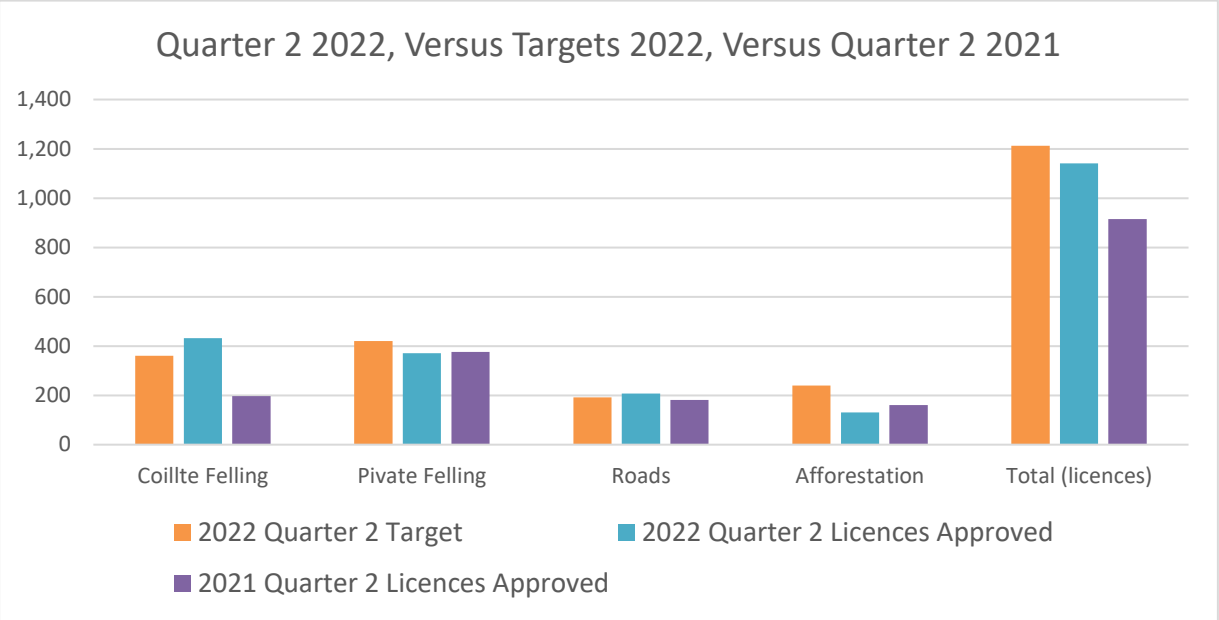
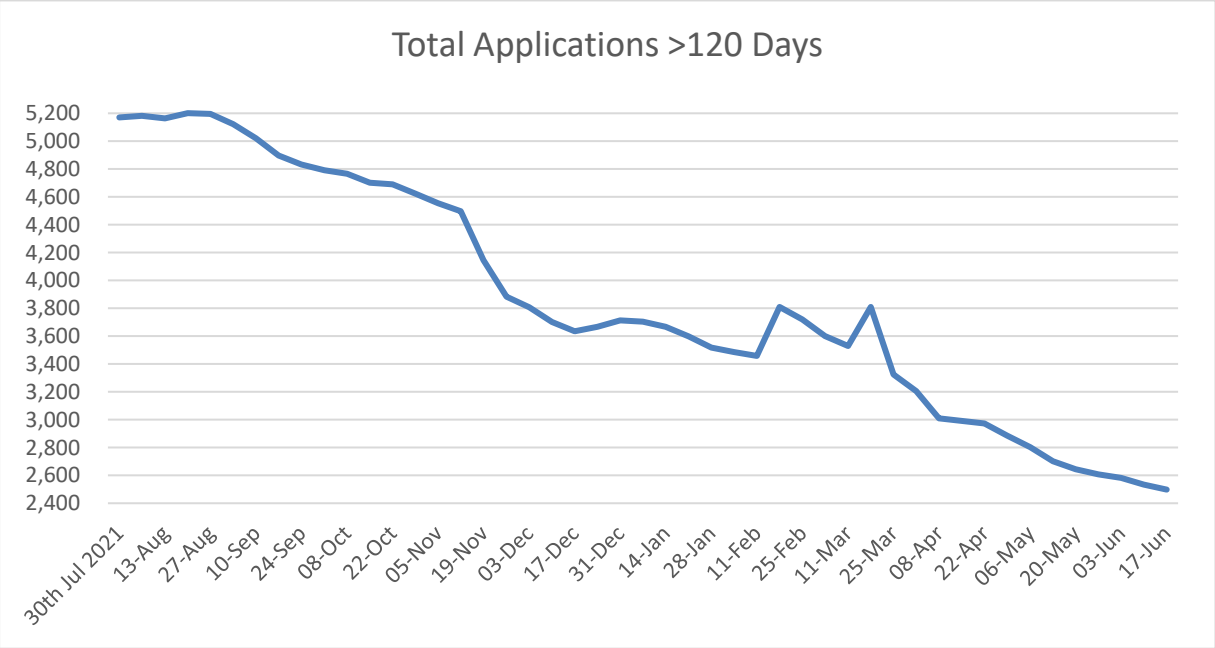


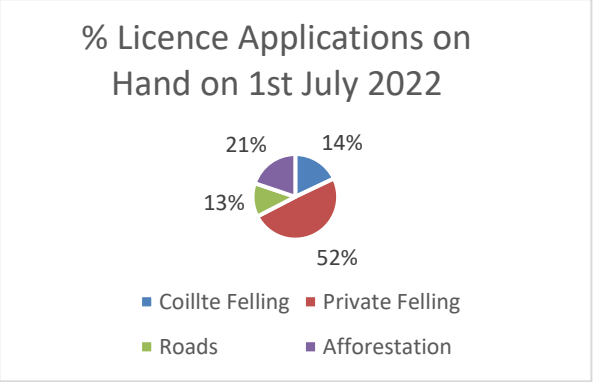
Figure 2: Total applications to be processed greater than 120 days



The number of applications with the Department over 120 days - can be seen in **Figure 2** above which has decreased to 2,573 applications by the end of June. In line with other planning authorities to ensure efficient use of resources, the Department has now brought in a policy on time-bound further information requests (FIRs). Files with outstanding FIRs over a set time will be removed from the licensing worklist. In relation to this policy reminders will 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 July 2022

Type of Licence	Number
Felling Coillte	456
Felling Private	1,642
Roads	402
Afforestation	648
Total	**3,148**



At the end of Quarter 2 2022, the Department had **3,148** licence applications on hand. Since 1st January, this figure has reduced from 4,803 and from 6,100 in August 2021. This represents significant progress and indicates that output is exceeding input i.e. the number of licences issued in Q2 was 1,141 and the number of applications received was 499.

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.

Delivery of Licensing Priorities in Quarter 2 2022

Licensing priority 1: Increase output of licences

Target	Output Q2 2022
Continue to reduce the figure of licences on hand by issuing significantly more licences on average each week than received	1,141 licences were issued and there were 499 applications received in Q2, comprising 115 afforestation, 219 felling and 165 roads.
Issue on average more than 100 licences per week for 2022	88 licences issued on average every week in Quarter 2, compared to 78 per week in 2021.
Remove all felling licences predating 2021 by end of the second quarter	DAFM is awaiting Further Information Request (FIR) responses on over 100 applications and has received responses on over 270 applications. DAFM will continue to prioritise all older files as soon as the information required is returned by the applicant. There are less than 90 files remaining that predate 1st January 2021 where a Further Information Request (FIR) was not sought by DAFM. However, most of these files have Appropriate Assessment Reports completed and are in the final stages of processing.

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 Q2 TAT: 16.6 months for afforestation, 15.8 months for felling and 10.4 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 Q2 2022
Ensure a different balance of licences to afford **higher priority to afforestation**.	There were 10 afforestation files issued per week in Quarter 2 2022 compared to 10/ week 2021. Additional ecology resources with a focus of afforestation are now in place, which will show increased output in the 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 resources secured for Ecology; engineer; inspector and admin grades.

Licensing Priority 3: Improving Quality of Forestry Applications

Target	Output Q2 2022
Deliver ecology-led training for professional foresters to facilitate the submission of habitat maps to accompany applications in agreed circumstances	DAFM have delivered two targeted training events for registered foresters on 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 (PAD) and an updated grant for applicants.	PAD pilot successfully demonstrated the concept, and an implementation plan is being prepared by DAFM.

LICENSING PRIORITY 4: DELIVERY ON OTHER SCHEME APPROVALS

Target	Output Q2 2022
Reconstitution and Underplanting Scheme (Ash Dieback) (RUS)	Ongoing, seeking harvest plans and continued ongoing engagement with Dept Housing on removing planning requirement. There are currently 485 applications on hand for a total of 2,041ha. –238 approvals have issued for this Scheme for a total of 802ha.
Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme (Frost)	390 applications received, processing has commenced, with approvals expected to commence in Quarter 3.
The Native Woodland Conservation Scheme	An additional 2 NWS Conservation schemes approved in Quarter 2. The Scheme added to dashboard and additional Ecology Resource allocated.
Small-Scale tree planting	A scheme to give effect to the Fur Farming and Forestry Provisions Act is currently under preparation for consultation.

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