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

Forestry Licensing Plan 2022

Quarter 4 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 Q3 (1st October – 31st December 2022).

SUMMARY OF QUARTER 4 2022 OUTPUT AND KPIS

1. 4,713 licences issued in 2022. This is 90% of the target set in the plan.
2. 3,559 applications were received in 2022.
3. 1,**084** forestry licences issued in Q4. This is 83% of the target set in the plan for Q4 (1,313 licences).
4. There are now 1,005 approved afforestation contracts with **7,343 ha** ready for planting.
5. The number of licence applications on hand for processing has dropped from 4,801 at the end of 2021 to **2,836** at end of Q4 2022 which is a net reduction of 1,965. Applications on hand includes 2,164 felling, 411 afforestation and 261 roads files.
6. **848** applications were received in Q4, comprising 132 afforestation, 579 felling and 137 roads.
7. In relation to afforestation, the quarterly licensing output for the Q4 of 2022 was **168** licences.
8. Licences issued for private felling and forest roads were both at record levels in 2022.
9. In relation to felling, overall felling licence output to the end of 2022 was 3,293 licences. This represents **9.6 million cubic metres** of wood, more than twice the forecast harvest for the second year running. Private felling significantly matched Coillte felling in 2022 with 1607 vs 1686 licences issued.
10. Output of forest road licences to the end of 2022 was **84%** of target providing a record of over 290 Kilometres. 718 roads licensed vs 850 target.

Figure 1: Total applications to be processed greater than 120 days

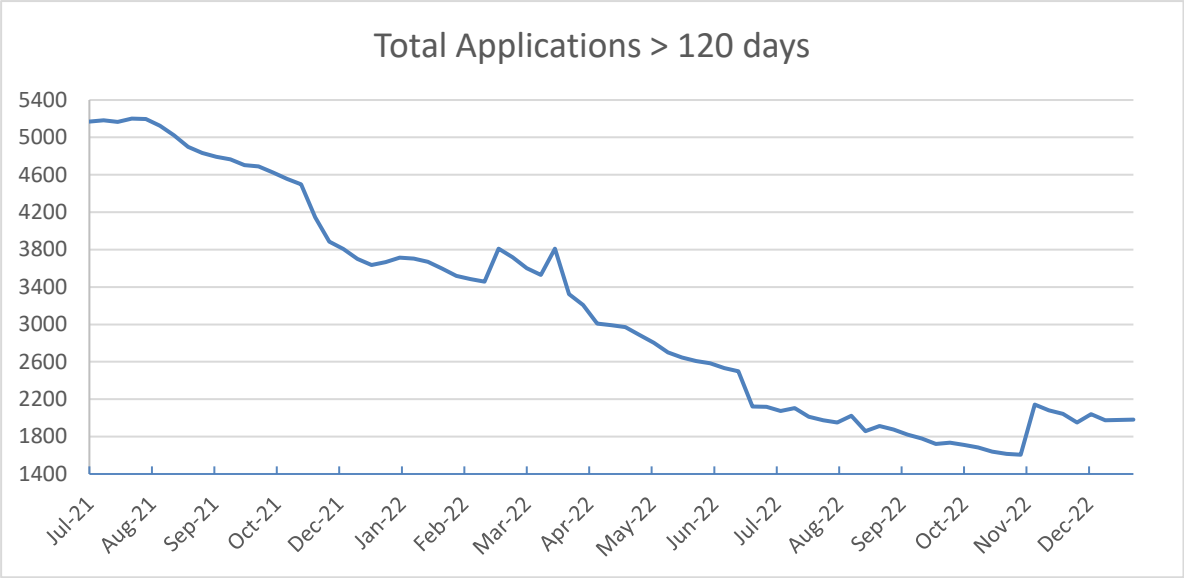


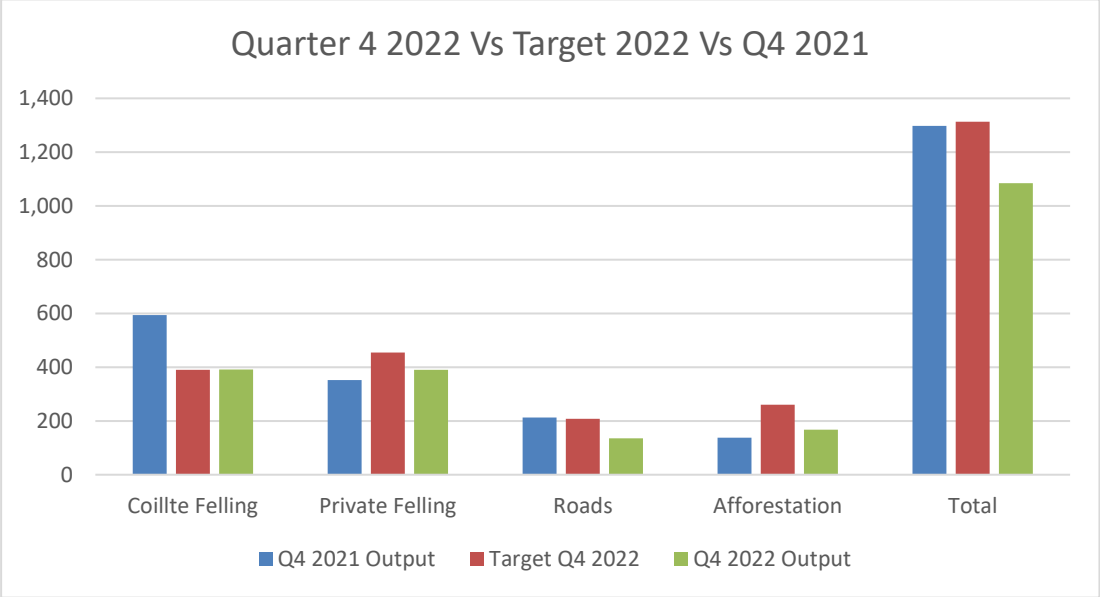
TABLE 1: QUARTER 4 2022 LICENCE OUTPUT

Licence area	Q4 2021 Output	Target Q4 2022	Q4 2022 Output
Coillte felling	594	383	391
Private felling	352	458	390
Roads	213	213	135
Afforestation	138	260	168
Total	**1297**	**1,313**	**1,084**

TABLE 2: 2022 LICENCE OUTPUT

Licence area	Q1 – Q4 2021 Output	Q1 – Q4 Target 2022	Q1 – Q4 Output to date
Coillte felling	1,532	1,530	1,686
Private felling	1,345	1,830	1,607
Roads	671	850	718
Afforestation	502	1,040	702
Total	**4,050**	**5,250**	**4,713**

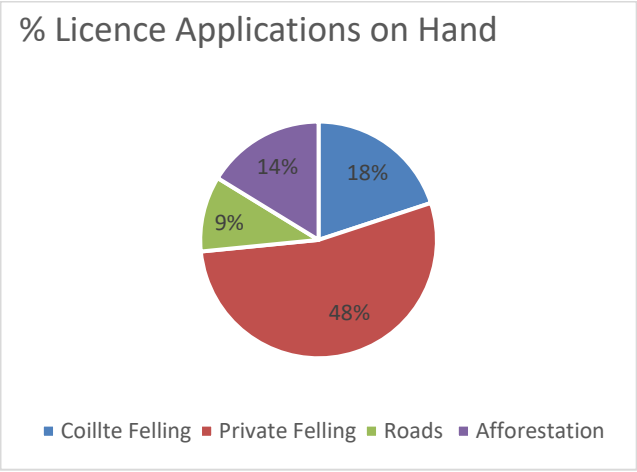
Figure 2: Quarter 4 2022 Licence output



The number of applications with the Department over 120 days - can be seen in **Figure 1** above has decreased to **1,983** applications by the end of 2022 from **3,713** at the start of the year. In line with other planning authorities to ensure efficient use of resources, the Department has brought in a policy on time-bound further information requests (FIRs). Files with outstanding FIRs over a set time are removed from the licensing worklist. In relation to this policy reminders continue be sent to applicants to make them aware of the situation with their file.

TABLE 3: BREAKDOWN OF TOTAL LICENCES WITH THE DEPARTMENT ON 31ST DECEMBER 2022

Type of Licence	Number
Felling Coillte	811
Felling Private	1,353
Roads	261
Afforestation	411
Total	**2,836**



At the end of Quarter 4 2022, the Department had **2,836** licence applications on hand. Since 1st January, this figure has reduced from 4,803. There were 6,100 applications on hand in August 2021. This represents significant progress and indicates that licences issued is significantly exceeding applications received.

Delivery of Licensing Priorities in Quarter 4 2022

Licensing priority 1: Increase output of licences

Target	Output Q4 2022
Continue to reduce the figure of licences on hand by issuing significantly more licences on average each week than received	**1,084** licences were issued and there were 817 new applications received in Q4, comprising 132 afforestation, 579 felling and 137 roads. The number of licences on hand continues to fall.
Issue on average more than 100 licences per week for 2022	**79** licences issued on average every week in Quarter 4, compared to 99 per week in Q4 2021.
Remove all felling licences predating 2021 by end of the second quarter	DAFM had 143 private felling files pre 2021 that are at different stages of processing. In addition, there are 54 outstanding FIRs from prior to 2021. DAFM is continuing to prioritise all older files.

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 licences issued in 2022 TATs are: 17.1 months for afforestation, 12.4 months for felling and 9.6 months for forest roads. Almost half of all files are issued within 12 months. 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 Q4 2022
Ensure a different balance of licences to afford **higher priority to afforestation**.	There were 12 afforestation files issued per week in Quarter 4 2022 compared to 11 per week Q4 2021.
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.	The additional resources secured in terms of ecologists; archaeologists, engineers; inspectors and administrative staff continue to deliver on output.

Licensing Priority 3: Improving quality of forestry applications

Target	Output Q4 2022
Deliver ecology-led training for professional foresters to facilitate the submission of habitat maps to accompany applications in agreed circumstances	Delivered in Q2

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 will be implemented for the new afforestation programme.

LICENSING PRIORITY 4: DELIVERY ON OTHER SCHEME APPROVALS

Target	Output Q4 2022
Reconstitution and Underplanting Scheme (Ash Dieback) (RUS)	Ongoing, **228** approvals have issued for this Scheme in 2022 for a total of 729 ha, leading to a total of 390 (1230ha) RUS approved since the start of scheme in 2020. There are currently 587 applications on hand for a total of 2,543ha. The number approved in Q4 was 81 for 208ha.
Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme (Frost)	**459** applications received, processing underway with 457 approved in Q4 totalling 3,238 ha.
The Native Woodland Conservation Scheme	15 NWS Conservation applications totalling 68ha were approved in Q4.
Small-Scale tree planting	A scheme to give effect to the Fur Farming and Forestry Provisions Act is currently being developed.

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