

Meeting note

Title of meeting:	Forestry Act Update
Date of meeting:	14/12/2023
Time of meeting:	14:30
Present:	Suanne Lilley-Owen, Tim Birch, Elaine Harrison, Nick Fackrell, Steve Attwood, Shona Smyth, Fiona McFarlane, Elan Evans, Chris Tucker, Jerry Langford, Elizabeth Lyon, Tracy Nettleton, Liz Halliwell
Apologies:	Fraser McAuley, Mared Jones.

Item No:	Item
----------	------

External guidance

1.
 - Will be available on NRW via an accessible word document. Will be circulated next week for comment on citizen space. Links will be sent out and you will have a few weeks to comment.
 - Welsh Government guidance pages on appeals are currently being developed. These will cover all appeals under forestry legislation and will be available by 1/4/2024. Discussion with NRW will be encouraged as appeals are seen as the last resort.

Action: NRW to circulate external guidance for comment

Liaison with stakeholders

2.
 - NRW attended the ICF conference and the winter fayre. Generally low level of attendees at stands. Comments received in relation to concerns about suspend and revoke powers but people liked the ability to amend/vary licences. Concern raised by 1 stakeholder about the 10% tree cover on farms under the SFS.

Action:- Jerry has send a paper about this issue to WG and will circulate to group. Fiona mentioned that the consultation on SFS has opened and

encouraged members to pass on the their colleagues so that the forestry sector views could be represented. [Sustainable Farming Scheme | GOV.WALES](#)

Application form

- 3.
- Suzanne updated the group on changes that are being made to the application form. The changes will help to improve the form and ensure that we ask for the correct information. Improvements will be made to make it easier to complete with applicants only needing to see the sections that apply to their application, an easier to use spreadsheet is also being developed. Hope that the changes will reduce the number of applications that are returned to applicants because they don't have the correct information included. Hope to move discussion that currently takes place during application stage to pre app. Will review in 12 months to check it is working but will consult with users before then.

Action:- Dates for engagement session where application form will be shared to be circulated.

Species guidance

- 4.
- Liz updated the group on the development of species guidance for applicants. The guidance is being prepared as a review of existing published guidance that is already available on our website.
 - The aim of the guidance is to help felling licence applicants understand the protected species requirements, how they could be impacted during forestry operations and ensure that they properly considered.
 - So for example, the guidance sets out how to identify whether EPS are likely to be present in a woodland, how there could be an impact from operations and how the work could be modified to avoid or minimise impacts. It brings together existing requirements that are already in place and these are also the same as those that are in use on the WGWE.
 - The guidance is at final draft stage and we are currently testing it to ensure that it is easy to follow and workable in a range of scenarios.
 - Once finalised it will be made available on the NRW website as an update to the existing guidance.
 - Schedule 1 bird guidance is also being updated.

Tracey and Tim both offered their own and their colleagues help/expertise in developing the species and bird guidance.

Engagement sessions

- 5.
- The following online sessions will be held in February to share information on application form, web pages, amendment request form
-

and compensation request form. More information will follow and attendees will need to complete a registration but provisional dates are;

20th Feb at 10am

22nd Feb at 2pm

28th Feb at 6pm

1st March at 10am

- We will produce a frequently asked questions document after the events.
-