

Update on Scottish Forestry's New Working Arrangements in Response to Coronavirus – COVID-19

This note provides information on Scottish Forestry's planned working arrangements in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

1. Scottish Forestry Staff & Offices

Scottish Forestry teams will continue to work with most staff now based from home and contactable by e-mail and phone.

Conservancy offices will continue to be staffed to monitor communication via post, e-mail and telephone. However, offices will only be open for customers to drop off or collect essential documents. Staff will be following Social Distancing principles, please follow the arrangements provided at office entrances.

It is likely that as a result of current disruption to normal working arrangements we will experience a reduction in our capacity to carry out forestry grant and regulatory work. To help cope with this, in discussion with customers, we have identified key areas of work which our staff will prioritise should capacity be affected.

2. Capital Claim Processing

Over the coming months Scottish Forestry will prioritise the processing and payment of capital claims to ensure continuing support to the sector.

In recognition of the difficulties applicants may experience in submitting claims within the current claim window, the capital item claim deadline for 2019 claims will be extended to 17 April 2020.

If possible, please submit your claim and all its associated supporting documents via the post.

3. SAF Payments

Scottish Forestry will continue to prioritise processing your 2019 SAF payments.

4. FGS Casework Prioritisation

If Scottish Forestry experiences a significant reduction in staff numbers the processing, assessment and approval of woodland creation applications will be prioritised over other FGS applications. Where staff capacity allows all other options will continue to be processed, but please plan accordingly and we thank you in advance for your understanding.

Applicants to the Forestry Grant Scheme can help by ensuring all the required information is provided when an application is submitted and that the information complies with the scheme rules and guidance. As we may have less time to support applicants, where FGS applications are not complete or ready for assessment, we will provide feedback, but may not be able to actively work on these cases.

5. Inspections

Our staff will be continuing to carry out inspections as part of the FGS capital claims authorisation process. Where our inspectors cannot access sites directly from a public road they will contact you, 24 hours in advance, to make an appointment and ensure you are content with their presence on your land. Staff will be following Social Distancing principles and you need not accompany them but we will inform you of such visits and during this phone call you can discuss any concerns you may have regarding the timing of our inspection.

6. Other Measures

- **Prioritisation of Felling Permissions for Operations in the Next 6 Months**
Applications for Felling Permissions with operations starting before October 2020 will be prioritised; other applications will be processed where staff capacity allows.
- **Chalara Felling Permission Application Process**
Trees infected with Chalara, unless immediately dangerous, require a Felling Permission. For straight forward applications, Scottish Forestry will use a fast-tracking process where applications will be assessed without the need for the normal public consultation period in order to expedite the issuing of the permission. Felling Permission applications related to Chalara infection will need to provide an arboricultural report or photographs as evidence that the trees are infected and present a risk.

Scottish Forestry will continue to review the development of COVID-19 and update our customers, and the sector as the situation evolves. In the meantime if you have any queries then please get in touch with your local [Conservancy or our National Office](#).

Operational Delivery
National Office
Scottish Forestry