

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

This note updates, and should be read in conjunction with, Briefing Note 27 (published on 20th March 2020).

1. Scottish Forestry Staff & Offices

Scottish Forestry offices are now closed, however staff continue to work from home and are contactable by e-mail and phone.

Conservancy offices will monitor communication via post, e-mail and telephone. However, please note in some instances offices will only be opened to collect post once a week.

2. FGS Capital Claims and Payments

The rapid escalation in measures to respond to the Coronavirus outbreak means that in some cases customers may not have been able to complete surveys and submit capital claims by 31 March 2020.

Therefore the deadline for Capital Claim (2019) Submission has been **extended to 17 April 2020**.

If any contract holders are still experiencing difficulties in submitting 2019/20 FGS claims by 17 April 2020, please contact the relevant Scottish Forestry Conservancy team to discuss your circumstances and make alternative arrangements.

The processing and payment of capital claims, and processing of 2019 SAF payments remains Scottish Forestry's main priority.

3. Submitting Signed Documents by E-mail and Declaration Signatures:

When contracts, variations, claims, succession forms and other legal documents are submitted to Scottish Forestry we normally require paper versions with original signatures on them.

In recognition of the current difficulties with receiving, signing and returning these documents we will, until further notice, accept documents in the following ways:

- **Paper forms:** as per the current normal practice, that have the original wet signatures. However, as our Conservancy offices are now closed and only have a reduced staff presence to collect mail, it would be preferable if you could e-mail your documents to us as set out below. [Local Conservancy Contact Details](#)
- **Scanned forms:** as scanned versions of the original paper documents, including the signed declaration, that you should e-mail to your local Conservancy. Please ensure that you e-mail this from your business e-mail account or your mandated representative's e-mail account as this will help us to authenticate your documents.

For claims, we ask that you retain the original paper claim form in your records should we require to see this at a future date. For all other documents, please post the original paper copy to your Local Conservancy office when possible.

- **Photographed forms:** if you are unable to scan, please e-mail photographs of the documents, including the signed declaration to your local Conservancy office. The photographs will need to be of adequate quality to allow us to process. Please ensure that you e-mail this from your business e-mail account or your mandated representative's e-mail account as this will help us to authenticate your documents. Please also post to us the original document as soon as you are able to so that we have a record of this.
- **Electronic forms:** If you cannot download a form (e.g. claim form, succession form) to print and complete as outlined above we will, on request, issue you with an editable version. Please do not alter the document in any way otherwise we will not be able to accept it as a true submission. You must submit your documents as a PDF by e-mail. This protects you as it ensures no-one can erroneously amend your document without your knowledge.

Please ensure that you e-mail this from your business e-mail account or your mandated representative's e-mail account as this will help us to authenticate your documents.

At your earliest opportunity, we ask that you print off your electronic form, sign it (using the normal practice of an original 'wet' signature) and post this to us. Whilst we will process your electronic submission, we must retain a record of the original signed declaration. Sending in this evidence quickly will help the administration of your contract, and is essential for payment of future claims.

Alternative Arrangements for Contracts

We would prefer that you return contract signing pages as scanned documents or photographic images. However, in exceptional circumstances, if you are unable to do this we will accept an e-mail declaration of your acceptance of the contract. Your e-mail declaration should be a response to our e-mail advising the contract has been approved and you should include the BRN, business name, contract name, FGS contract reference, name and position of the individual making the declaration and must come from an authorised business member or a mandated agent. Where this approach is taken, the Conservancy will issue you an e-mail confirming approval of your application to allow work to be started.

Please note that we will not be able to issue you with an agreed contract until a later date, when you have returned a signed paper copy of the signing page.

4. Site Visits and Inspections

In line with current Scottish Government [Guidance](#), Scottish Forestry has suspended forestry grant and regulatory site visits and inspections until further notice. When site visits and inspections are recommenced they will be done so in accordance with the inspections process outlined in Briefing Note 27.

We will process all claims through to payment by deferring any required inspection. These inspections will then be carried out at a later date.

5. Claims for 2019 Woodland Creation

Where the completion of planting projects have been delayed by the Coronavirus outbreak, customers are advised to claim for all 2019/20 work that has been carried out and request variations for outstanding work that still needs to be completed. Scottish Forestry will pay for completed work and agree variation requests relating to partial claims for 2019 woodland creation.

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