

CHAPTER 6

General Site Requirements

6.1 Agricultural land

The term afforestation means the planting of land not previously under forest. The Forest Service Afforestation scheme is applicable to agricultural land only. Agricultural land has been defined (EU Commission decision 83/461/EEC of 4 July 1983) as any one of the following:

1. Arable land (cereals, dried and fresh vegetables, potatoes, sugar beet, forage roots and tubers, industrial crops, crops under glass, flowers and ornamental plants, forage plants, seeds and seedlings) and fallow land
2. Kitchen gardens
3. Permanent pasture and meadow
4. Permanent crops (fruit and berry plantations, citrus plantations, olive plantations, vineyards, nurseries).
5. Land which has been used for agricultural purposes (including extensive) in **recent years**

The Forest Service has defined recent years as 5 years for the purpose of the Afforestation Grant Scheme

Lands in other uses such as turbarry (turf cutting), amenity, golf courses and other non agriculture activities are not entitled to grant aid under the Afforestation grant scheme. In some instances other schemes such as the Woodland Improvement Scheme and the Neighbourwood and Native Woodland Scheme, may be applicable.

6.2 Commercial Crop

Both conifer and broadleaf sites which are proposed for planting must be capable of producing a commercial sawlog crop of wood. Commercial wood is defined as timber suitable for industrial end use.

The land must be capable of producing yield class 4 for oak or beech or at least yield class 14 for Sitka spruce using normal forestry practices. The use of Sitka spruce as an indicator recognises that other conifers may not achieve this production on the same site.

6.3 Access

6.3.1 Ownership of Access

The applicant must own or have written permission certified by a solicitor to use or have right of way on the access route to the plantation. Where the owner's site is land locked, access to a public road should be sought and written permission to use an access road should be provided to the Forest Service.

6.3.2 Adequate Access

It is essential that a landowner is aware that he/she will require adequate access from a public road

to the proposed plantation to establish, manage and harvest the crop and accommodate forestry traffic in an unrestricted manner. Where adequate access does not already exist the access must be capable of being upgraded to the required Forest Service road standard at harvesting stage. Exits /entrances to the main road should be developed within the property. In a situation where there are no proposals for a road the land should be accessible by forwarders and other terrain vehicles.

6.4 Minimum Area

6.4.1 Conifer plantations

- A conifer plantation must not be less than 1 ha in total.
- Where conifer plantations adjoin existing forests then a minimum plantation size of 0.25 ha applies.
- A conifer plot must not be less than 0.25 ha.

6.4.2 Broadleaf plantations

- A broadleaf plantation must not be less than 0.1 ha.
- A broadleaf plot must also not be less than 0.1 ha.

6.5 Minimum Width

The minimum width applies to the actual planted area and does not take into account areas of the plantation left unplanted (e.g. buffers along roads, rivers, streams etc.). The minimum width of any plantation and plot (broadleaf and conifer) should not normally be less than 40 metres. Where sites do not meet this requirement but are in the following categories they may be submitted for approval:

- Plantations and plots where more than 50% of the proposed plantation will exceed 40 metres in width.
- Plantations and plots where more than 50% of the proposed plantation will exceed a width of 30 metres wide adjoining an existing woodland.
- Plantations and plots where more than 50% of the proposed plantation will exceed a width of 30 metres for small (under 0.16 ha) broadleaf areas.