



Consultation Policy

Reviewer: Tom Byrne

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Coillte's Consultation Policy

- As part of our commitment to the stewardship of our forests we seek and welcome comments and suggestions from people about how we manage our forests in the most responsible way for the benefit of society and future generations.
- We are committed to ensuring that people are aware of our plans and policies and that we present all of our information in a clear and understandable way.
- We are committed to providing convenient ways for people to raise matters of interest and concern and pass on their views to us for consideration.
- As part of our role as stewards of our forests, our plans and programmes comply with legislative frameworks, codes of practice, standards in forest stewardship, as well as the need to maintain a viable forest sector in Ireland.

1. Background

Our core purpose is to enrich lives, nationally and globally through innovative and sustainable management of natural resources.

We take our responsibility for managing almost 7% of the land area of the state seriously. We are committed to a partnership approach with our customers and stakeholders, to understand their needs and work towards solutions to issues and concerns, which are of benefit to all. We also have a keen awareness of how our decisions can impact on society, people, and nature.

As part of our activities, our staff are meeting people frequently and listening to their views and ideas and incorporating these into local plans and objectives. We are constantly seeking to improve our more formal consultation processes and to provide clear and up-to-date information on our activities to interested parties, groups, and to the public in general.

The Consultation Policy stated on page 2 sets out in a clear and concise fashion our position in relation to consultation.

We will continue to improve and enhance our consultation procedures, which we believe have brought many improvements to the engagement process and the overall management of the nations forests.

2. About Coillte

Coillte was established under the Forestry Act 1988 to manage the states forests on a commercial basis. This Act says that these commercial activities should be balanced with the social and environmental needs of society.

Coillte operates in a wide range of businesses:

- timber production
- panel product manufacture
- land management
- renewable energy
- recreation
- environmental management

For more information on Coillte please click on www.coillte.ie

3. Our consultation standards – what to expect

- We consult with people while we are developing new plans for our forests.
- We will consider each comment, suggestion or issue and make changes where possible to our plans. In some cases we will not be able to change our plans and in these cases we will endeavor to explain the reasons why.
- All comments and suggestions will be acknowledged and our ability to incorporate them in to our plans will be communicated to those who submitted comments.
- Every effort will be made to choose suitable and appropriate venues for all forest related consultation meetings.
- We will monitor our own performance and improve practice where we think it falls short.
- Our performance in consultation is audited externally as part of our assessment for Forest Stewardship Council Certification.

4. How you can get involved

Any person or organisation with an interest is welcome to become involved in our consultation process. There are a number of ways to get involved in providing ideas and commenting on our developing plans and we welcome general comments, suggestions and ideas by post, fax, phone, email or click on www.coillte.ie

5. Our planning occurs at three levels – National, District and Local.

5.1 Our National Approach

Much of our work in local forests comes about as a result of policies set at national level. This includes the amount of wood we produce each year, our policies on the environment, and how and where we provide social benefits for example, through recreation. When we develop new forest management and district strategic plans we invite public comment on a draft.

National forestry policy is set by the Government via the Forest Service, which is part of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. National forestry policy and legislation set the context for many of the decisions made at a region, district or forest level. For example the Forest Service controls the annual harvest, through the felling licence system. Similarly other legislation and EU directives inform the planning process and limits in many ways the level of management choices open to the company.

5.2 District Planning

Our forest estate is divided into 13 Districts. Each of these has a District Strategic Plan (DSP) which sets out the medium to long term direction for the District and is informed by overall national objectives and other planning issues such as county development plans etc. DSP's are renewed every 5 years.

5.3 Forest Management Planning

Each district is divided into a number of Forests. There are currently 321 individual forests across the country, each of which has a five year forest management plan. These Forest Management Plans are in turn informed by National and District policies as well as local requirements. For example, Coillte reviewed its Forest Management Plans (FMP's) in late 2008 and during 2009. A comprehensive consultation process took place during which stakeholders were invited to submit feedback on our draft Forest Management Plans. This feedback was considered and where appropriate taken on board in these plans.

5.4 Day to day operations

Consultation on routine forest operations, takes place frequently with neighbours, stakeholders, and interested groups, on an ongoing basis, and is part of our partnership approach in how we go about our business.

5.5 Other uses for our land

Coillte's practice is to sell, lease or develop a limited amount of non-strategic land for purposes other than forestry. These activities represent a key part of Coillte's business, and deliver benefit to individuals and communities at local and national levels. The greatest number of sales are made in response to local demand and typically comprise house sites, isolated dwelling houses, sections of recently acquired farms, small outlying forest properties and gravel pits. Consultation is carried out on these sales, leases or developments.

Coillte also seeks to add value to its estate by undertaking property development projects. Development projects that may be considered range from community developments, tourism development, industrial development, and residential development. Consultation on each of these projects is defined on a case by case basis.

Part of Coillte's substantial land asset, particularly upland sites, are very suitable for the generation of wind energy and the development of telecommunication facilities. Whilst the process of finalising the precise location of such sites will be ongoing for a number of years, any development, sale or lease arrangement arising will be subject to consultation. Coillte's policy on removal of these lands from the area covered by our FSC certificate, is outlined in our land excision policy.

**For further information on Consultation in Coillte visit www.coillte.ie
or contact:**

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