

# Minister Hackett to align forestry licensing and appeals with planning process

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Minister of State Pippa Hackett has confirmed that a draft bill “to align the forestry licensing and appeals system with other similar planning processes” has been published.

This amendment to the Agriculture Appeals Act 2001 is now available on the Department’s website for public comment.

“After consultation, the draft Bill will be presented to the Oireachtas for consideration as soon as possible after the summer recess,” she said.

In addition to the draft bill, she outlined a number of other measures, including:

➔ The appointment of an independent chair to lead the implementation of the MacKinnon review on afforestation.

➔ The development of a new scheme for the creation of native woodlands on state and other public lands.

➔ The development of a new a portal to enhance public participation in forestry decision-making in Ireland.

“As a nation, we need to plant more of the right trees in the right places,” she said.

“The programme for government commits to an ambitious afforestation plan, and a robust



**The Government’s planting targets will not be reached again this year.**

## Welcome move

The IFA, Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) and FII welcomed the minister’s proposals, especially the MacKinnon review.

“Implementing MacKinnon, including the recommendation to develop a Customer Service Charter, should be carried out as soon as possible,” said Donal Whelan of the ITGA.

“Forest owners are impacted and suffering financially from the considerable delays in receiving felling licences.

“A customer charter and the recommended planning grant to compensate growers in providing an environmental report should be prioritised.”

Regarding the proposal for new native woodlands on state

IFA’s Geraldine O’Sullivan said:

“We would like to see the same focus from the minister to re-engage with farmers in the afforestation programme, as this year’s outturn is expected to be little over 2,500ha, raising serious questions about Ireland’s climate change plan that has an annual target of 8,000ha.”

## Licences

Minister Hackett outlined measures to speed up licences, including the recruitment of a significant number of ecologists.

“As a nation, we need to plant more of the right trees in the right places”

“These measures are a clear demonstration of the importance the Government attaches to a forestry sector that can deliver the best possible economic, social, environmental and employment benefits.”

Mark McAuley of FII accepted there is now a genuine desire to improve the situation with forestry licensing, but added that the new system in the department “has to prove itself now and deliver a strong flow of licences in the coming