



## Grants & Regulations news

Protecting, expanding and improving England's woodlands

This month, we are updating our Public Registers and want to let you know how this could impact your applications. We also wanted to share with you our customers survey results.

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### Updates to our IT systems including Public Registers

**We are currently in a period of IT change, we will shortly be able to offer a new Public Register for Felling and New planting and for Environmental Impact Assessment.**

As part of this update, Forestry Commission staff will not be able to access the existing Public Register for Felling and New Planting and for Environmental Impact Assessment projects for 14 days (from the 25 January to 6 February 2019).

#### **What will this mean for my case?**

There will be a delay in processing any cases for felling, new planting or environmental impact assessment that need to be published on our Public Registers. They will need to wait for IT transition to be completed before they are registered on the new system and published.

Cases already published by or on 25 January 2019 will be unaffected and will remain visible to the public for their full 28 day public notification period via the existing web pages.

No other externally facing systems will be affected.

#### **What will the new Public Register do?**

In the future:

- There will be a single Public Register for Felling and New Planting and for Environmental Impact Assessment cases that will publish forestry proposals, while they are considered by the Forestry Commission, to allow the general public to comment on them
- The public will be able to comment online on proposals that we publish directly from the Public Register

- Cases will be published on the Public Register for the actual 28 day period, and no longer the 28 days from the Monday following entry on the Register
  - There will be a second Public Register for Felling and New Planting and for Environmental Impact Assessment cases that will publish the final decisions we make on these cases
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## Our customer survey results

### Did you know that we send out customer surveys every 3 months?

Thanks to all of our customers who have taken the time to complete the survey, we wanted to share some results, your feedback and what action we have taken.

#### Overall Satisfaction

**You said:** You felt felling licences took too long to process.

**We did:** Employ additional staff to help clear the backlog of felling licence applications. Launch a new online [Felling Licence Online service](#) to make the process more efficient and transparent. This is a major step forward in a process which previously relied on paper-based application forms being completed and sent back via post.

#### Application process

**You said:** The relationship between the FC, NE and RPA wasn't good enough and hindered the Countryside Stewardship (CS) application process.

**We did:** Set up a working group with the other agencies involved to ensure all the responsible agencies know the problems experienced by the customer and we work together to resolve them. As part of the RPA delivering CS agreements now there is an improvement plan in place and we work RPA day to day to try and ensure the processes to issue CS agreements and pay claims are working and improve them for woodland customers.

We have also worked with the RPA to stop unnecessary changes to the mapping of woodland land parcels and reverse changes that would have otherwise delayed the offer of agreements.

#### Notification of Application Progress

**You said:** There is very little communication about progress after the initial application has been received.

**We did:** For [Countryside Stewardship capital grants](#) we have introduced flow diagrams in each manual so it is clear which agency handles different stages in the process and applicants know who to contact. RPA is currently looking at the way applications are received and initially handled, we are working with RPA to ensure these new arrangements work for woodland applicants.

For Felling Licences, the new online service gives customers the ability to apply for, track, manage and print their approved felling licences online.

For our other grants ([HS2 Woodland Fund](#), [Woodland Carbon Fund](#) and [Woodland Creation Planning Grant](#)) we send notifications within 2 working days and have a dedicated mailbox for each grant scheme.

## GOV.UK

**You said:** It is hard to find the correct information.

**We did:** GOV.UK is designed to help users find the information that they are looking for through the search facility. We encourage customers to use Google or the search bar in GOV.UK. We have added a number of frequently used links to the top of our [Departmental page](#) and will review them to help direct customers to the most used information. There is also the option at the bottom of each page to report a problem or a page you can't find – please use these to help us improve.

## Knowledge and Helpfulness of Forest Services Staff

**You said:** You were quite happy with the level of helpfulness and knowledge of our staff

**We did:** We have let our staff know this as it is something we work hard to do. We will endeavour to maintain the current skills base, work ethic and knowledge of ever evolving grant and regulatory systems amongst our staff.

## Getting in touch with us

**You said:** It was difficult to get hold of the person you need to speak to.

**We did:** Set up regular meetings with NE and RPA to improve how we communicate between ourselves and our customers so that the call centre staff can put you through to the right person first time.

There are always more ways to improve and we will be asking for further feedback in the coming months – we value your feedback so please do complete the survey when requested even if you have done one previously.

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### If you have any questions, please contact us:

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