

CONSULTATION PROCEDURE

In September 2002 members of the project management team drafted a consultation procedure to progress action A2 – Elaboration of Action Plan.

This procedure outlined the steps to be taken both at national, local and site level to involve The National Parks and Wildlife (formerly Dúchas) in the operational work of the project. Details of these steps together with a checklist are on the following pages.

This procedure was issued and adopted both centrally and by all site managers. The consultation procedure took place from October 2002 and is ongoing. Minutes of consultation meetings are kept on file.

Consultation with other affected stakeholders such as Fisheries, Forest Service and local communities have also taken place and minutes of meetings are on file as with The National Parks & Wildlife meetings.

The COFORD/Coillte research project (Management Options for Forests on Western peatlands) which is a project similar to the LIFE project but targeting sites lying outside cSACs remains currently on hold due to Government cut backs in the latter part of 2002.

However a joint project between Coillte and the Forest Service to look at “red areas “ (which were defined as sites having a Yield Class of <12m³/annum and having little potential to replace the existing crop with a better one), has begun and a staff member assigned to progress this project.

Coillte under its Biodiversity Management Programme is carrying out a number of ecology surveys at forest management unit level (FMU) to determine the 15% land area which will be managed for biodiversity. The Connemara FMU survey is being carried out by Dr. John Conaghan who is also working on contract on the Life Project. The Life project manager is also co-ordinating the work of this survey and proposals for some restoration work will be similar to the Life project, experience gained on the life project will be invaluable here to link both.

DUCHAS CONSULTATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL OPERATIONS ON LIFE PROJECT SITES

Under the European Union Habitats Directive regulations, we are legally obliged to consult and get approval from Dúchas BEFORE commencing any operation on or adjoining a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The procedure to be adopted is as follows:

(NOTE: * = these action are being carried out centrally, i.e. by Kevin Donnellan/Caroline White – all other actions are to be carried out by Site Manager)

- * Covering letter with copy of all plans to be sent to Caitriona Douglas (Dúchas representative on Project Management Group).
- * To be sent to Director (Chris O'Grady) and Divisional Managers (i.e. Michael Sweeney, Don McMahon and Pat Warner): covering letter, project information with national site location (overview) map.
- * To be sent to local District Conservation Officer and Regional Manager: covering letter with a request for an early meeting to discuss the operations involved; copy of each Life Project plan (Appendix 6 of LIFE application, which lists proposed actions to be carried out on site); maps of the project site, showing the locations of proposed actions; copy of Notifiable Action Application Form for completion by Dúchas; copy of LIFE project Press Release (as background information on the project).
- Site Manager to follow up correspondence by phoning District Conservation Officer for site meeting at which ALL operations planned will be discussed – this includes operations not covered by felling licence. For example: if a road or turntable is planned, the plan, with completed EIA and map showing the location of the road, will be given to the DCO on the day. Remember – Dúchas have draft Conservation Management Plans for SAC's.
- Other issues for discussion include location of boardwalks, car parks sensitive areas like streams, flushes, bog pools (consult with John Conaghan)
- Site Managers should invite Conservation Rangers, through DCO, to these meetings as SAC management is a major part of their work. We should continue to involve Dúchas staff in the restoration process, over the life of the project, as they are key players in the management of SAC's. It is also an opportunity to develop a positive working relationship on nature conservation matters.
- Meetings with all Dúchas staff and issues discussed should be recorded both in the project file and also as part of the certification requirement. Issues raised should be either agreed at the meeting or referred for further clarification.

FILE CHECKLIST BEFORE OPERATIONS COMMENCE ON LIFE PROJECT SITES

- Have Duchas approved work on site plan?
- Have Forest Service granted limited felling licence?
- Have you completed Environmental Impact Appraisal for the site?
- Have you completed H.IR.A safety form?
- Have Fishery Board being consulted on plans?
- Have other interested bodies or individuals being consulted?
- Are details of all consultations on file?
- Is water monitoring being carried out on this site?
- Are WALRAGS planned for this site?
(Water monitoring levels)
- Is vegetation monitoring being carried out on this site?
- Have you discussed/ shown on map or on site with/to other managers/operators the location of water monitoring, walrags, vegetation monitoring quadrants and any other sensitive locations on site?
- Is this a demonstration site
- Is appropriate EU signage in position on the site?